What is the professional identity of Careers Advisers in Higher Education?

Challenges and opportunities for careers service leaders and managers

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Abstract

This aim of this study is to understand the professional identity of careers advisers in UK universities, at a time of unprecedented interest in employability across the sector following an increase in undergraduate tuition fees in England.

The research question is “What is the professional identity of careers advisers in higher education in the ‘new’ employability climate? Opportunities and challenges for careers service leaders and managers.” Here, professional identity is defined as ‘the experience and self-understanding of those fulfilling a particular occupational role’. The study is qualitative, using the methodological approach of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. The areas of literature that have been reviewed relate to the nature and development of the professions and the development of individual and collective professional identity. The history of the careers adviser role within the UK education system also provides context. Data was collected in summer 2012 through interviews with 21 careers advisers from 14 universities across England, Wales and Scotland using a stratified sample based on league table data.

This study makes a contribution to knowledge by suggesting a professional identity for careers advisers which is Undefined, Parochial, Unrecognised and Unconfident yet Dedicated, and by making recommendations for leaders and managers, and careers advisers themselves, to consider in their approaches to staff development, (self-) advocacy and connection with broader institutional priorities. Such approaches do not conflict with a primary purpose of ‘helping students’ and can serve to strengthen the impact and influence of careers advisers as experts who address the increasingly critical employability agenda.

Keywords: recommendations, management, university, careers, adviser, interpretative, phenomenological, analysis, professional, identity.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background

There are very few studies into the professional identity of careers advisers in higher education. This thesis aims to make a contribution to knowledge by developing an understanding of the professional identity of careers advisers at a time of great change for their area of work. For many years following a career as a careers adviser was akin to following a career as a teacher or social worker, starting with a postgraduate qualification followed by a probationary period in the workplace. From this beginning, careers advisers worked with students in schools, colleges and with employers and training providers to help young people to decide upon and follow fulfilling careers. Meanwhile, universities across the UK also employed careers advisers to help students to decide which careers to follow and to connect them to graduate opportunities. In 2001 school careers advice in England was absorbed into the broader Connexions service at the expense of a specialised careers service while, in contrast, university careers advisers continued to enjoy freedom to fulfil their professional responsibilities with varying, but generally limited levels of institutional attention and expectation.

In 2010 it was announced that from 2012 undergraduate tuition fees would be raised to £9,000 per year for English students studying anywhere in the UK and for students from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland studying at English universities. This change has put the focus of students, parents and, for this study, careers advisers, on ‘value for money’ which, for many universities and UK governments translates into ‘ability to get a graduate job’. For careers advisers, the ‘new’ employability climate offers opportunities for greater recognition of their work, is more questioning of established practice, requires greater accountability and presents challenges to the careers adviser claim to be the experts holding professional skills and demanding professional status in this increasingly high profile dimension of the university experience. It is important in these changing times that careers advisers and careers services are positioned and equipped to enable students to follow

fulfilling careers when they graduate, thus addressing an increasingly key performance indicator for universities across the UK.

I am a careers adviser by training and currently a Director of Careers and Employability at a large, international university based in England. I was drawn to this area of research through my own experience of managing careers advisers through this change and my own commitment to careers advice as an important feature of the student experience in higher education. As the employability agenda has grown in prominence and a 'new' employability climate has emerged, I have noted with interest and frustration, a recurrent lack of recognition or acknowledgement of careers advisers as professional experts in this arena; either at an institutional level, by groups within an institution or, often, by careers advisers themselves.

In this thesis I aim to investigate this perception and interpretation of careers advice and advisers by seeking to understand the experience and self-perception of careers advisers in higher education. The phrase that I am using to capture this phenomenon is 'professional identity', where professional identity is defined as 'the experience and self-understanding of those fulfilling a particular occupational role': this thesis is not an investigation into identity in the heavily theoretical sense but uses the term 'professional identity' as means to self-description in a particular context.

1.2 The Research Question

The research question for this study is, therefore: "What is the professional identity of careers advisers in higher education in the 'new' employability climate? Challenges and opportunities for careers service leaders and managers." The findings will be my contribution to existing knowledge and I will then offer recommendations based on a deeper understanding of the experience and self-understanding of careers advisers and my experience of careers service leadership and management. These recommendations, in line with the aim of a DBA which must contribute to management practice, will be for careers service leaders and managers and for careers advisers themselves, to support them to realise the full potential of the role of careers advisers within higher education.

1.3 The structure of the Thesis

As I have illustrated in this introduction, I intend to move between first and third person when writing this thesis, the better to contextualise meaning: I will use first person when relating personal experiences, interpretations and perspectives and third person when reporting the views of others or the literature in general. The thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 Literature

Chapter two outlines the historical and academic context for this study by charting the history of the role of careers adviser outside (**chapter 2.1**) and inside higher education (**chapter 2.2**). This is followed by a review of the literature. Prefaced by some definitions, the literature explored for this study considers the nature and development of the professions, covering their purpose and features, the impact of social and technological changes and the impact upon professions of broader organisational and managerial roles (**chapter 2.3**). Consideration is then given to the literature that examines the development of individual and collective professional identity. Individual professional identity development is discussed in the context of occupationally-focussed identity rather than the literature on the development of individual identity in its broadest sense (**chapter 2.4**). Collective professional identity is considered in the context of studies within a range of occupational roles and professional areas including higher education (**chapters 2.5 and 2.6**).

Chapter 3 Method

Chapter three is a discussion of the methodologies that were considered within a Social Constructionist approach (**chapter 3.1**) and the choice of method; Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (**chapter 3.2**).

Chapter 4 Methodology

In chapter four the method used to collect and analyse the data, is described, explaining the sampling rationale behind the 21 interviews across 14 institutions in England, Wales and Scotland (**chapter 4.2**) and the process of data collection (**chapters 4.3 and 4.4**). The reader is also taken through the stages of analysis following the IPA method (**chapter 4.5**), with a sample of a transcript and subsequent annotated documents available in the Appendices (**Appendices 8-13**).

Chapter 5 Findings

Chapter five is used to present the findings from the study under the headings of the five super-ordinate themes which emerged through the analysis of the data. Quotations from respondents are used to illustrate and to add depth to the understanding of the themes.

Chapter 6 Discussion

In chapter six, the findings are discussed and a professional identity for careers advisers is suggested which is Undefined (**chapter 6.1**), Parochial (**chapter 6.2**), Unrecognised (**chapter 6.3**) and Unconfident (**chapter 6.4**) yet Dedicated (**chapter 6.5**). References are made throughout the discussion to the themes within the literature which were reviewed in chapter two.

Chapter 7 Recommendations

In response to the professional identity which has been suggested as a result of this study, recommendations are suggested in chapter seven, to careers service leaders and managers and to careers advisers themselves. These recommendations are offered as approaches which could serve to strengthen the influence and impact of careers advisers and careers services more

generally within their institution. Chapter seven also includes an outline of areas of potential further research (**chapter 7.6**).

Chapter 8 Reflection

The thesis draws to a close with reflections upon the method, the findings and the experience of sharing the findings and of personal and professional development in chapter eight.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

The conclusion in chapter nine brings together this thesis as a whole, providing a concise summary of the research journey undertaken to address the question “What is the professional identity of careers advisers in higher education in the ‘new’ employability climate? Challenges and opportunities for careers service leaders and managers.”

Chapter 2 Historical and Academic Context

This chapter provides the historical and academic context to this study, surveying the relevant literature and previous research in this field in order to address the following question: 'What is the professional identity of careers advisers in higher education in the 'new' employability climate? Challenges and opportunities for careers service leaders and managers.'

Before exploring the relevant literature, it will be helpful first to consider the role of careers adviser outside higher education - the first setting in which the role had a UK-wide identity and structure. This history is relevant to this study as many careers advisers, leaders and managers who are now established within universities started their career in local education authorities, so these external changes contribute to their own perception of professional identity. It is then important to consider the development of the role of careers adviser within higher education where changes, particularly in recent years, are changing the nature and focus of this role. This again has an impact on perceptions of professional identity.

2.1 The role of Careers Advisers outside Higher Education

a. A Coherent Role

In 1948, following the end of the Second World War, the role of Youth Employment Officer was established to work through local councils, in order to support young people to find work when they left full-time education. Provision to support young people through the process of career planning and decision-making was formalised through the 1973 Employment and Training Act, which made it mandatory for local education authorities (LEAs) to make provision for all pupils to receive Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG). This act introduced a clear professional pathway for careers advisers:- a Diploma in Careers Guidance, part one of which was studied on a full-time basis within a Higher Education Institution (almost exclusively in post-1992 universities) and part two of which was achieved during the first year of work, usually within a LEA careers service. Although the Diploma in Careers Guidance (DipCG) was not declared

mandatory for an individual to work as a careers adviser, it became increasingly common for those in such a role to have a DipCG. In 1991, the year that I trained as a careers adviser, only fourteen institutions offered the qualification and there was competition for places. As a careers adviser, it was routine to have a caseload of particular schools within which one-to-one guidance interviews were delivered, alongside some delivery of careers education in groups, to offer drop-in and booked appointments within the careers office itself and to liaise with local employers. Time was also spent maintaining occupational knowledge and knowledge of university courses and options, in order to support those students who wished to progress into higher education.

Career progression for careers advisers within their services took the form of increasing management responsibilities as a team leader or progressing to the role of service manager. Advisers who were keen to maintain a student-facing delivery focus developed their careers by moving to work in a further education college or a university careers service. Working in a university careers service was considered the most desirable destination. This was due to the perceived status of a university compared to local education authorities and colleges, the opportunity to work with a highly able client group and favourable employment terms and conditions which traditionally included earning potential to the salary equivalent of a senior lecturer.

b. Fragmentation and de-professionalisation

The role continued in this way until the move to delivery through contracted companies in England, as a response to the 1993 Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act, increased the need for accountability for each interaction, as well as for career destination outcomes. The most significant change for careers advisers since the formal constitution of their role in 1973 occurred in 2001. While Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland continued with the model described above, the Careers Service in England was incorporated into the Connexions Service. The aim of the Connexions service was to provide comprehensive support for young people at risk, as well as careers guidance for all, with an overarching aim of providing “the

best start in life for every young person." (Connexions Strategy, 2000). The strategy brought together plans for a flexible 14 – 19 curriculum, increased quality in 16 – 19 education, targeted financial support for those in learning and overarching "outreach, information, advice, support and guidance." In order to deliver this service, careers advisers, the youth service, young people's social services, some teachers, the youth offending teams and some of those working in the community and voluntary sector were brought together to work within "A new profession of Personal Adviser" (Connexions Strategy p. 45).

The change in work for careers advisers in England was dramatic, moving away from a specialist careers-focussed role to one which involved working with parents and carers of young people deemed to be at risk of underachievement, brokering access to specialist agencies, such as housing and young people's drug prevention services, as well as providing careers advice and guidance (Jeffs and Smith, 2001). A short diploma course to train Personal Advisers was introduced and delivered by a range of training providers. However, unlike the DipCG, there was no supervision of practice as part of the qualification. This increased the challenge of transition for careers advisers now expected to provide advice on issues ranging from housing to drug usage, while those more familiar with such issues were now expected to offer careers advice with minimal training and little, if any, experience. Following their 'conversion' to Personal Advisers, many careers advisers in England left the Connexions Service. Personal Advisers new to Connexions work were routinely offered the opportunity to gain National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in Guidance, as opposed to the DipCG. The NVQs were commonly at level 3 (equivalent to A level) and level 4 (equivalent to undergraduate study). The DipCG would be equivalent to an NVQ level 7.

Connexions came back under Local Authority control in 2008 and was disbanded in 2011 when attempts were made to restore careers advice to all young people by moving responsibility to the schools, but careers advice as a profession has yet to recover. The report from a Careers Profession Taskforce, chaired by Dame Ruth Silver in 2010, summarised the careers

profession in England as “a weakly professionalised community of practice which does not have the essential characteristics of a strong and autonomous profession” (p3). To address this, the report recommended the development of common professional standards, a restoration of a minimum entry-level qualification and a commitment to Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to achieve a “stronger, more unified profession.” (p3). Reflecting on attempts to encourage schools in England to take responsibility for arranging the delivery of professional careers advice, John Cridland of the Confederation of British Industry described careers advice in schools as being “on life support” (Cridland, 2013).

Meanwhile, in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the concept of a careers service, working in partnership with schools to provide impartial careers information, advice and guidance, alongside school-based education, as part of a governmental organisation, has continued, although there have been reviews and changes to organisational structures. In Wales, Careers Wales is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Welsh Government and provides an integrated, all-age, careers service. In Northern Ireland, the integrated all-age careers service is a government service, while in Scotland, Skills Development Scotland, a non-departmental public body, provides an all-age guidance service.

c. Re-establishing the profession?

The Careers Development Institute (CDI), established in April 2013, brings together a range of bodies representing those in the areas of Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) and Career Coaching in an attempt to create “a single voice for the Career Development Sector” (CDI, 2014). A UK Register of Career Development Professionals, established in 2012, is described by the CDI as “the sector equivalent to chartered status” and, in order to join, professionals need to hold a qualification in career development at a recognised level and credit. At the time of writing there are currently 69 qualifications or pathways which are recognised, the majority of which are National Vocational Qualifications, rather than university-accredited courses (CDI, 2015). Whether this can

safeguard the career development profession and restore, to pre-Connexions days, the position and professional identity of the remaining careers advisers in England remains to be seen. This would be necessary, in order to align with their peers in Scotland Wales and Northern Ireland, to create, once more, a UK-wide professional identity for careers advisers outside higher education.

At the time of writing (2015), the number of higher education institutions offering the Qualification in Careers Guidance (QCG), formerly the DipCG, has reduced from 14 in 1991 to eight. Anecdotally, the competition for places is much reduced and cohort sizes are far smaller than they used to be. In a recent survey of Local Authorities in England, about their careers professional workforce, it was reported that, between 2009/10 and 2012/13 alone, there had been a 47% decrease in the employment of careers professionals (a term now commonly used to describe the former careers adviser role), due to increased demands on time, low morale and the fragmentation of employment contexts (Langley et al, 2014). The authors of this report suggested that in England "The overall picture is accordingly, of rapidly declining professional and organisational capacity" (Langley et al, 2014 p.10). Although careers advisers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have not been affected by the Connexions years, it can be argued that the loss of their English counterparts has had an adverse impact on their professional identity through a reduction in numbers and a diminishing of their professional voice.

Progression into careers adviser roles in higher education has been severely limited by the introduction of Connexions; the lower level of qualification and the absence of experience of working with young people more likely to progress to university means that it is harder for candidates from this background to make the transition into higher education than it would have been if they had followed a pre-Connexions career path.

Having traced the history of careers advisers outside universities to the present day, the development of the role of careers adviser in higher education is outlined below.

2.2 The role of Careers Adviser within Higher Education

a. Evolving with the service

From the establishment of a careers service within each university by the 1950s, through the expansion of the sector in the 1960s, to extension and further expansion from the late 1990s to the mid 2000s, the careers adviser remained the core professional role within a higher education careers service. The defining features of careers services were:- individual advice and guidance to help students to choose the careers they wished to follow, the provision of information on jobs, careers and employers available to students once they graduated, and connection of students to employers where there was mutual interest, often referred to as 'the milkround' (Watts, 2007). All these activities were led and delivered by careers advisers, each traditionally focussing on students from a particular set of academic disciplines. Careers advisers had a strong influence within their service: they were the largest single staff group and it was most typical for a head of careers service to themselves work as a careers adviser, undertaking the full range of duties alongside management responsibilities.

In terms of professional background, careers advisers were initially recruited to their roles for industrial experience, rather than for guidance and careers education expertise, but following the expansion in the 1960s, as a result of, as well as alongside, the Robbins Review, a greater diversity of students were attracted into higher education. These students, still in an elite category (Watts, 2007), had an interest in a broader range of occupations and options when they graduated. They, therefore, needed more help in making career choices. This raised the profile and interest in guidance amongst careers advisers. It also introduced a greater interest in group work and careers education amongst practitioners as a way of meeting greater demand from larger student cohorts. This change meant that from the 1970s onwards, more careers advisers were recruited from LEA backgrounds. They had undertaken the DipCG and, therefore, had formal training in the provision of Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) and in employer liaison.

In the early 1990s, under the auspices of the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS), the higher education professional association, it was noted that comparable professions (for example, personnel) were in the process of developing occupational standards and a formalised system for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) as a way of ensuring a minimum standard of practice and demonstrating competence in their field of expertise (Mortenson and Graham, 1997). Recognising that careers advisers in higher education would also benefit from such developments, the AGCAS Certificate and Diploma (both part-time courses) were introduced in 1992 in partnership with the University of Reading. The courses cover working in careers services in higher education, theories of careers education and guidance, group work with students and employer engagement. Enhanced assignments were required for the Diploma level of the qualification and an MA pathway was also established (Mortenson and Graham, 2007). The introduction of the AGCAS courses meant, therefore, that an increasing proportion of careers advisers in higher education became professionally qualified which strengthened their position. The developments began in partnership with the University of Reading, but in 2010, due to departmental changes at Reading, the University of Warwick became the host institution for the AGCAS Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma and MA in Careers Education, Information and Guidance in Higher Education.

b. A broader portfolio

Over time, the growing demand from students for careers support, alongside a lack of accompanying investment in careers services by institutions, meant that the focus of delivery moved away from 1:1 careers guidance discussions to a more structured and service-led approach. This involved providing more accessible information on career paths and employers that students could use independently of careers advisers, and shorter interventions, perhaps on a “drop in” rather than pre-booked basis. This broadened the range of staff working within services, which had previously focussed on careers advisers and those supporting their work. In a further development, the national initiative “Enterprise in Higher Education” which ran from 1987 – 1996, acted

as a catalyst for a growing involvement by many careers advisers in Teaching and Learning although this varied depending on the approach of each institution. The aim of Enterprise in Higher Education was to better prepare graduates for a changing world of work; 63 institutions received funding from the Department of Employment to develop schemes and new approaches to teaching and learning which would develop transferable skills and workplace awareness. In many cases, this brought careers services closer to mainstream academic work and increased an interest in key skills for employability (Burniston et al, 1999).

In 2000, Baroness Blackstone announced a review of higher education services in England, stating "University careers services are too often a Cinderella service, out on the remote edges of Higher Education, with little or no presence or influence in the lives of students and the academics who teach them. This has to change. Standards must rise. Where you study - and where you live after graduation - should not affect the quality of careers advice and guidance you receive." (Harris Review, 2001 p.2).

'Developing Modern Higher Education Careers Services', the review report, was published in 2001. The Harris Review made recommendations to the sector, to institutions, to careers services themselves and to the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS). A key recommendation was the establishment of sector-wide agreement on the core services that a careers service should offer to students, graduates and employers. At an institutional level, Harris recommended monitored standards of service delivery, partnerships with academic departments and partnerships with external guidance networks. (Harris, 2001).

A regard for the Harris Review (although sector-wide recommendations were not implemented), a rapid growth in student numbers in the UK Higher Education sector from 2000 onwards and a buoyancy within the graduate recruitment market from 2003 – 2008 led to an expansion and divergence in the scope of activities and roles undertaken by careers services. In each case, developments were directed by institutional priorities. Alongside guidance to individual students, careers services were increasingly involved

in teaching and learning, extra-curricular skills awards, work placement creation and support, enterprise and business start-up activity. The growth in technology, and the change in the way students were using it, influenced the way in which services were delivered, an obvious example being the increased importance of the content and accessibility of websites.

During this time, the term ‘employability’ gained increasing traction across the sector. It is not a term that originated within careers services, but was increasingly absorbed into their lexicon, where it was used as a description of their activities and then incorporated into the title of the service itself. Employability refers to a broad set of skills and personal qualities, which are understood to equip students for success in the world of work, regardless of sector. The concept of employability is not generally understood to encompass the capacity to make good career decisions, support for which was considered the primary skill of careers advisers.

As careers services extended their activities, developments were conventionally led by careers advisers; from the introduction of accessible information, and moves towards teaching and learning, to an increase in employer engagement and placement development. Even enabling functions, such as Information Technology and Marketing, were often introduced and led by a careers adviser, although it was rare for careers advisers to be given formal line management, as organisational structures within services remained relatively flat. This maintained the position of careers adviser as a key contributor to the management and delivery of a careers service. In many services, the decision-making group within a careers service remained dominated by careers advisers during the extension of activity beyond the traditional professional focus.

However, over time, the diversifying of activities changed the shape and, in many cases, the scale of careers services as new roles were brought in to deploy different expertise (for example, Teaching and Learning, IT, Marketing) to that conventionally held by careers advisers (Watts, 2007). In 2005/6, the sector underwent an exercise to align all roles onto a single salary scale. In a number of institutions those careers advisers, who were on

the salary points that aligned with senior lecturers, had their role questioned as their roles were deemed to be on a grade below. Appeals were successful where it was accepted that careers advisers had an expertise in guidance, or that their teaching and experience of career development was equivalent to that of a senior lecturer in their own field. This encouraged a focus on guidance and/or on Teaching and Learning amongst careers advisers, depending on the institution, despite an ongoing diversification of activities within careers services. An unintended consequence of the sector-wide pay review was, in some institutions, for careers advisers to move against the trend of diversification within careers work to a position of specialisation.

The range of institutional approaches to careers services also led to a greater variation in the positioning of careers services, traditionally perceived and positioned as a student service. In 2005, 53% of higher education careers services were in student services, 14% in Teaching and Learning, 6% in external relations and 27% were independent resource centres (Maguire, 2005).

c. The impact of diversification and a questioning of the role

By the mid – late 2000s, the diversification of activities and specialist roles within careers services meant that, particularly in larger services, rather than being the core professional role, careers advisers were one role alongside specialists in placements, business start-up, curriculum development, marketing, and employer engagement, depending on the priorities of the service. Those working in more recently introduced specialist areas were also supported by their institutions to undertake AGCAS qualifications, which ceased to be the preserve of careers advisers and information staff. Management structures within careers services evolved to reflect their diversity which meant that, rather than the careers advisers forming the service management group, their voice was represented alongside other functions which had equal influence on the leadership and management of

the service. This trend continued through to the publication of the Browne review in 2010, when institutions across the sector began to review their careers service provision.

d. A changing landscape

The graduate recruitment market changed significantly in 2008/9, following the UK financial crisis; job offers were withdrawn and the number of internship and graduate vacancy opportunities fell. Careers services in universities adjusted their services, in response to the changed environment, but institutional focus on their careers service provision remained largely unchanged by the economic crisis. However, the publication of Lord Browne's independent review into higher education funding and student finance (Browne, 2010), marked a change in the way that careers services were viewed within their institutions. The subsequent introduction of a maximum tuition fee, of £9,000 per year, for English undergraduates commencing their course from 2012 onwards, introduced the concept of 'return on investment' into the undergraduate student experience on a larger scale than ever before. This turned the spotlight on graduate destinations and employability as a 'measure' of return on investment in their education by individual students. Across the sector, there was a greater focus on what careers services do and an interest in how institutions prepare graduates for life beyond university and, particularly, the world of work.

The impact of this on careers services has varied. In some cases, their work has been perceived by their institution as a problem with regard to graduate employment success, and in others, the solution. Restructuring, repositioning and positive, or negative, changes to investment in careers services have reflected the prevailing institutional view. The ascendancy of employability as an institutional priority has also meant that, within academic departments and other professional services, there has been a growing interest in, and engagement with, the employability agenda. This can be for political reasons (where involvement in employability is associated with favourable institutional positioning and funding), but, more broadly, there has

been a developing academic interest in employability from a pedagogical perspective.

Depending on the position of the careers service within their institution, these have been positive or potentially threatening movements. In some cases, services have received greater resources, in order to deploy staff within schools and faculties, as well as centrally, to deliver employability support to students through curricular and co-curricular channels. In others, the careers service has been subsumed into a broader business engagement or student experience function. A further approach is formally to distinguish careers service activity from that of 'employability', giving responsibility for the employability agenda to academic school-based staff. This can be a particular challenge in the arena of placements, where an accredited placement sits within teaching and learning, but placements themselves play a key role in developing student employability. Elsewhere, some careers services are being encouraged to focus on placements as a key route to graduate employability.

These developments present a challenge to careers services to define their expertise and clarify their role in enhancing student and graduate employability: is the careers service role (a) to develop employability skills - often a re-conceptualisation of transferable skills such as teamwork and communication or; (b) to focus on career choice, application techniques and access to employers; is it both; or is it something else? There is a challenge to careers services to consider whether they are focussing on "recruitability" i.e. the ability of a student to secure a job, rather than "employability", the capacity of a student to develop skills and attitudes which will lead to a satisfying career (Speight et al, 2012). At the time of writing (2015), based on my own knowledge of the sector, careers services are coming to different conclusions and, consequently, diversity between careers services within UK universities has increased in recent years. In Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, changes have been less dramatic than in England, although institutions there continue to evolve their approaches to employability in response to graduate recruitment market forces and UK-wide sector trends.

As the post-Browne interest in careers and employability across the sector has had an impact on the position, priorities and influence of the careers service, so too have careers advisers been affected by their institutional approach. In some cases, careers advisers have been given, or offered, enhanced responsibilities, often involving formal line management. In other services, their work has remained focussed around individual or group support which, depending on the institution or service, places them at the centre of delivery or as one of a number of service functions. Where the focus of activity has been around individual guidance and small-group support, questions have been asked about the efficiency of a highly qualified and experienced (and well re-numerated) careers adviser undertaking certain levels of activity. In some cases, heads of careers service have brought in new types of staff with titles such as careers assistant, employability officer and employability development officer, on a lower salary grade than careers advisers, to undertake activities such as applications skills workshops and to deal with drop-in queries which ten years ago would have been delivered by a careers adviser.

These developments are illustrated by the job description in Appendix 1 for an employability development officer and Appendix 2, which shows a job description for a careers and employability adviser, both advertised nationally in 2014. The careers adviser job description offers a clear reflection of a 'typical' careers adviser role within higher education, while the employability development officer represents the newer type of role which many careers services are introducing.

It is interesting to note that while the careers adviser role requires a degree and a professional guidance qualification or equivalent, the requirement for the employability development officer requires A levels or equivalent and experience in a customer-facing, rather than careers advisory, role. A university degree is desirable, rather than essential, and there is no mention of a guidance qualification, even though the role involves providing first-line information and advice, group presentations and workshops which will assist students in their career planning. These are all activities which have been traditionally delivered by experienced careers advisers qualified to a

postgraduate level. The hiring of the employability development officer, and other equivalent roles, imply that traditionally core professional careers adviser activities actually require a much lower level of qualification and experience than has previously been the case.

e. The impact on leaders of higher education careers services

In line with the careers services changes outlined above, the role of the most senior manager within a university careers service has also evolved. In larger and more comprehensive services, rather than a fellow-practitioner steering a group of professionals, a careers service leader is now responsible for leading a multi-functional team to collective success. Depending on the institutional approach to careers and employability activity, the position of the role also varies. They may be a leader of their service within a broader student support service; a head of one of a number of student services; or a head or director of a standalone service with responsibility for institutional employability strategy. This is reflected in the range and number of job titles that encompass this role:- from Careers Service Manager, Head of Careers, Head of Employability and Learning Support through to Director of Student Employability and Director of Employability and Graduate Development.

Another trend in recent years has been a move away from institutions regarding a background and qualification in careers advice as prerequisite for the individual who leads their careers services. Graduate recruitment and broader student service backgrounds have increasingly been seen as equally desirable, accompanying a sense, either that the employability agenda may be most effectively steered by someone with extensive experience of (graduate) recruitment, or that careers support is a student service like any other. This has diversified the approach within careers services still further.

Although the scale of their role and responsibility vary, there are common challenges for careers service leaders:- ensuring a strong institutional position and voice for the careers service; ensuring an effective and functional careers service team and meeting the careers and employability needs of students in the context of the graduate recruitment market and,

particularly, the resources available to them. It is in meeting the latter challenge that the role of careers advisers comes most under scrutiny. It could be argued that this is in sharp contrast to the position of influence that careers advisers held within university careers services for many years. Careers advisers often find themselves under growing pressure to demonstrate the efficacy and impact of their work and to claim influence and expertise in their field both within their service and across the institution.

f. The Professional Association for Careers Advisers in Higher Education

Despite the changes outlined above, The Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) remains the single professional voice for higher education careers services in the UK. AGCAS was established as the Standing Conference of University Appointment Services in 1967 and has evolved in line with the development and diversification of university careers services. Originally, AGCAS was an association for careers advisers and heads of service who, themselves, at that time, had a substantial student and employer-facing caseload. In 1971, AGCAS extended its institutional membership to include services within polytechnics. Following the ethos of collaboration, AGCAS members shared their own and collectively developed information and professional support resources, established working groups to address particular professional issues and skill development needs and built a strong community of professional practice (Kirkham, 2007).

As the range of roles within careers services expanded, so too did AGCAS membership , firstly to include information officers and then to those in all other functions including curriculum-based, employer liaison, work placement and enabling functions such as marketing and data management. The principles of collaboration continued, represented most formally through its working groups, conferences and training programme and a strong, informal professional network. Despite the divergence in careers services, particularly in the 2000s, AGCAS remained strong and evolved its mission to represent sector trends. In 2006, its mission read: “the professional association for HE careers practitioners, harnessing the expertise and resources of its

membership for the collective benefit of its members, HE careers services, their clients and customers and the sector overall" (AGCAS, 2006).

Since the Browne Review, AGCAS has maintained its position as the collaborative higher education careers service sector association, although, like careers services themselves, they have started to see the impact of growing interest in employability in the positioning of other stakeholders. One example is ASET, established thirty years ago as the Association of Sandwich Education and Training, for those involved in work placement support. Although it maintains its focus on integrating work and learning, in 2014 it changed to describe itself as "The placement and employability professionals' body" (ASET website, 2014). By comparison, the AGCAS mission for 2013 -16 describes AGCAS as "the professional body for careers and employability professionals working with higher education students and graduates and prospective entrants to higher education." (AGCAS website, 2015). This illustrates the challenge to careers services and to careers advisers to maintain their position as the experts in employability, while employability is a high priority across the sector; there are many related people and bodies who are keen to claim an association with this dimension of higher education. It is interesting to note that in 2015, ASET have changed their description to "The work based and placement learning association' (ASET Website 2015), perhaps suggesting that ASET felt they were more distinguishable through a focus on work-related learning, rather than employability.

To summarise the professional context, over the last 20 years, the role of careers advisers outside higher education has been constrained and then diluted through government-led changes, the most impactful of which was the operation of the Connexions service from 2001 – 2011. During this particular period, the level of qualification required to offer careers advice was reduced to the equivalent of GCSE or A level standard, rather than a postgraduate diploma. Despite attempts to re-establish a distinct careers service from 2011 onwards, the profession outside higher education is still recovering and has lost many of its experienced and well-qualified members. Meanwhile, over the same period, the role of careers advisers in universities was first

strengthened through the introduction of a distinct qualification to support practise and opportunities for curriculum development and then consolidated, throughout the 2000s, as higher education expanded. However, the recent focus on employability, as a result of the raising of undergraduate fees, has led to greater scrutiny of careers services and, therefore, careers advisers. This, in turn, has led to mixed fortunes across the sector with careers advisers considered to be somewhere in the range of important, relevant, a limited contributor or an inhibitor to the employability agenda, depending on the institutional view.

Having outlined the historical context of the role of careers advisers outside and within higher education thereby raising briefly questions and issues about the way in which careers advisers might understand or perceive themselves and their roles, the next section considers the literature which explores professions and professional identity, relating it to careers advisers in higher education.

2.3 Academic Context

There are four areas within the literature that frame the academic context for this work; the nature and development of professions; the development of individual and then collective professional identity, and the impact of multi-professional teams on perceptions of professional identity. After exploring these areas in the context of the role of careers adviser, the chapter concludes with a summary of previous work undertaken in this field which demonstrates the contribution to knowledge offered by this study.

In the remainder of this chapter, there will, at different times, be references to a ‘profession’, a ‘professional’/’professionals’ and ‘professional identity or identities’. These are terms which are interpreted differently across academic disciplines and theoretical perspectives, so for clarity, this section begins with a definition of each term as it will be used, and should be understood, in this study.

a. Definitions

i. A Profession

The most appropriate definition of a profession to use in this study is the one formulated by Sir Alan Langlands in his 2005 report “Gateways to the Professions” for the Department for Children, Schools and the Family. Langlands defined professions as:

“those occupations where a first degree followed by a period of further study or professional training is the normal entry route and where there is a professional body overseeing standards of entry to a profession” (cited by Spada, 2009:3).

This definition is understood to apply to a restricted group of occupations, such as medicine and law, which have a long-standing history of graduate entry and control of admission to practice. However, this definition has also been adopted by accountancy, engineering and a range of allied health professions, such as nursing and midwifery, which have more recently become dominated by graduate-level entry. In the case of this study, the profession is higher education careers advice and the professional body is AGCAS, the equivalent of nursing and the Royal College of Nursing.

ii. Professional

In this thesis, the term ‘professional’ is used as a noun to describe a person who is a member of a profession. This contrasts with the use of the word by AGCAS (2006), which uses the term professional to describe a range of workers in this sector, by referring to ‘careers and employability professionals’.

The term ‘professional’ is also used in other contexts, in this thesis, as an adjective to describe behaviour and approaches which would be expected from members of a profession. These might include transferable qualities such as ‘acting with integrity’ and specialist activity, such as teaching or providing careers guidance.

iii. Professional Identity

A review of the research into professional identity indicates that it is a concept with multiple interpretations. Following a review of the higher education literature on the development of professional identity, Trede et al (2012) suggested that professional identity research is "...an underdeveloped field where there is little agreement amongst scholars" due to the diversity of theoretical frameworks that underpin such work (Trede et al, 2012:375). This resonates with the work of Cornelisson (2006), who suggested that while organization theory is a well-established academic field, 'organizational identity' is, in effect, a metaphorical concept, which is understood in fundamentally different ways depending on the theoretical framework within which it is being studied.

Of the 20 studies into professional identity that Trede et al reviewed, only one offered a definition of professional identity; "a sense of being a professional" (Paterson et al, 2002:6) although this brief definition sits alongside further discussion of the attributes that describe the behaviour of a professional. There are examples of studies elsewhere from Trede et al's work which also assume an understanding of professional identity to the extent that they offer no definition (McMichael, 2010; Nixon, 2006).

The study for this thesis draws upon sources cited by Trede et al (2012) which suggest that professional identity can be considered to be "a way of being and a lens to evaluate, learn and make sense of practice" (2012:374) and a particular description of professional identity as "a self-image which permits feelings of personal adequacy and satisfaction in the performance of the expected role" (Ewan, 1988:85). For the purposes of this study, therefore, professional identity is defined as 'the experience and self-understanding of those fulfilling a particular occupational role' namely a careers adviser in higher education.

Accepting that a profession is made up of individuals fulfilling a particular role, professional identity has two forms; individual and collective. Each member of a profession will have their own unique, individually developed, professional identity which is a synthesis of their individual and professional

selves. Collective professional identity will apply to a specific profession, such as architecture or mental health nursing, and here professional identity is the shared identity that professionals co-create, experience and understand by being a member of that profession. Perspectives on professional identity development are discussed further in Section 5 of this chapter where context-specific descriptions of professional identity, are considered.

Having clarified the definition of key terms being used in this thesis, this section now concentrates on the four areas within the literature that frame the academic context for this work:- the nature and development of professions; the development of individual and then collective professional identity; and the impact of multi-professional teams on professional identity. These four areas are covered in turn below.

b. The nature and development of Professions

In a review of American and British studies of the professions, MacDonald and Ritzer (1988) suggested that the focus on distinguishing professions from other occupations, within America sociological studies into the professions, was an increasingly fruitless task, which was the reason some were suggesting that there was limited distinction to be made. By contrast, they categorised studies into the professions within Britain as focussing on inter and intra-professional conflicts, the relationship between professions and political systems, the link between the professions and social stratification and theoretical approaches which emerge from the ideas of Marx and Weber. MacDonald and Ritzer (1988) suggested that this breadth of perspectives into the phenomenon of a profession demonstrated that there is still a place for investigations into the professions as a social force.

i) Purpose and features

The literature considered here focuses on the purpose and features of a profession and the characteristics that distinguish a profession from other occupations. However it also considers the relationship between professions,

political systems and management structures, inter and intra-professional conflicts and the way in which professions have evolved, as these perspectives are relevant to this study. It is relevant to consider careers advisers in higher education in the context of the features and purpose of professions, and the way in which professions are evolving, as this will contribute to the development of his or her professional identity.

A key attribute of a profession is that it solves a problem using specialist knowledge. The nature of the problem is one which is recognised by the public, who therefore value and/or are dependent on the work of the professional (Torstendahl, 1990). One purpose of a given profession therefore is to provide a service by the deployment of their specialist knowledge. Wilensky (1964), describes a profession as a group where those within it control their own training and admission to practice and which evaluates its own standards of performance. This resonates with the Langlands definition stated above. Friedson (2001) suggests that the standards of performance expected within and from a profession are of a high quality. He also suggests that in addition to the profession's control of training and admission to practice, a professional should have control of their work and exercise autonomy in carrying out their role. Friedson suggests this on the basis that the practice of those within a profession involves contextual discretion and judgment, as well as the application of skills and knowledge.

There are also critical perspectives on the purpose and features of a profession which emerged in the 1960s: these suggest that the main priority of a professional group is to protect the interests of those within it, by preserving a monopoly in their sphere of work in order to gain privilege through money, status and influence (Scott, 2008). It is, therefore, argued by some that it is possible to distinguish a profession from other groups of workers as "simply those groups who have been successful in organizing, defending and regulating the group." (Kenny et al, 2011: 86). So, rather than controlling access to training in order to ensure the quality of professional practice in order to benefit the public, Larson (1990) suggests that this control is a way of limiting and imposing downward pressure on the number of those within a profession. This preserves demand and therefore the ability to

charge a high premium for that professional service. Larson separately suggests that a further aim of this professional "project" is to gain social status as a result of being a member of a profession (Larson, 1977). A further argument to support the view that professions are motivated by a preservation of status is the suggestion that the specialist knowledge which a profession owns and controls is a strong source of power and that such knowledge as power is strengthened further by alignment with the academic credentials of the institution where the knowledge was developed (Collins 1990). For example, a doctor who has gained their knowledge in a highly esteemed university will receive status from their profession, which is reinforced by association with the prestigious traditional university in which they studied.

It is interesting to consider careers advice in higher education in the context outlined above. Where careers advisers have gained a postgraduate qualification and developed their careers information, education, advice and guidance practice there is parity with members of other established professions. However, the status they will derive from that qualification and the institution which made the award will be limited, particularly for those who first worked in LEAs and then moved into higher education. Their postgraduate qualification would typically be from a former polytechnic, rather than a traditional university, so they would not gain additional status, in the conventional sense, through their place of learning.

Considering the purpose of a profession, the 'problem' of making good career decisions and successful job applications is not often recognised by the public in the same way as for example legal, medical, financial or architectural needs. Careers advisers provide a service that helps people to make career choices and successful applications into areas of work that suit their skills and interests, thus optimising their contribution to the success of the employing organisation alongside personal fulfilment. However, there are many people who make career decisions and transitions into work (the quality of which is a matter of perspective), without using the services of a careers adviser. It could be argued that the public do not value the impact a careers adviser can make, because they underestimate the broader personal

and societal impact of people of being employed in ‘unsuitable’ jobs such as, for example, jobs which under-utilise talent resulting in an undermining of personal confidence and fulfilment.

Where clients do seek careers advice, the role of the careers adviser is, traditionally, to empower the client, so that that they are guided to make their own decisions and applications. Therefore, the result of a ‘successful’ careers intervention is that the client ‘owns’ the outcomes, the careers adviser has provided support (for example career decision making, application support or interview preparation), but is not then present with the client at all stages throughout a career development or job application process. The same cannot be said in of the role of a barrister or solicitor in relation to a court appearance or a nurse in relation to care in a hospital setting, where a member of the public cannot negotiate those situations without them. This gives the role of the professional a clear purpose, the requirement for which is then clear to the public.

The ‘protectionist’ approach to professions is not one which has been adopted by careers advisers whose key motivation within their role is to help people into fulfilling careers for their own, the organisational and wider societal benefit. Careers advice is not a ‘gate-keeping’ profession; a person can make a job application without seeking careers advice. Equally, the provision of careers advice is not regulated, careers adviser is not a protected title, so any one could choose to describe themselves as a careers adviser and offer advice. Lack of regulation is also evident in the fact that there is no formal accountability for the quality and consequences of careers advice. This is unlike financial advisers, who are regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority, with an ombudsman scheme in place for complaints if money has been lost as a result of the advice given (Citizens Advice Bureau, 2015). The lack of gate-keeping and regulation may also contribute to a lesser public understanding and appreciation of the benefits of careers advice, separating it further from more accountable and recognised professions. This seems to suggest that careers advice is not a profession. However, the fact that careers advisers are trained through a postgraduate qualification, use specialist guidance skills and deliver careers education

using current and comprehensive labour market knowledge suggests that they do possess key professional attributes.

ii) The impact of social and technological changes

Academics have also examined the impact of social and technological changes on the purpose and nature of professions. Abbot (1998) looks at the challenges that professions face, based on new forms of knowledge and advancing technology. The research organisation Spada (now Infinite Spada) investigated the state of the British Professions in 2009, on behalf of the Law Society, the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS). They also considered the impact of new knowledge and new technologies on the nature of a profession and explore them in combination with a change in public attitude to the professions. Spada (2009) noted a decline in the positive public perceptions of a profession, which they link to post-industrial values, specifically a decline in deference to authority and a move away from a focus on physical and economic well-being, towards individual freedom and self-expression. This means that rather than 'simply' having their problem solved, an individual expects much more personal enrichment and benefit as a result of receiving a professional service. However, individuals are less likely to defer to the professional providing that service than previously, when a professional would have been considered an 'authority figure'.

This change in perceptions and expectations of a profession is compounded by the speed and breadth of knowledge available to all as a result of rapid technological changes. These complicate the dynamic between the professional and the public as the power that a profession had through the possession of knowledge has been eroded as such knowledge becomes more widely and publicly available. However, while both parties may have access to similar knowledge, it is still the professional who is in the stronger position to judge and pronounce upon the quality of an interaction between a professional and a client from a knowledge perspective. Spada refer to this as an "Information asymmetry between professionals and clients." (Spada, 2009:6).

These social and technological changes are evident within higher education where current students are ‘digital natives’ (brought up surrounded by technology) and highly brand aware which draws them further into the use of new technology. Generational theory - the apparent common behaviours of ‘Generation Y’ (those born 1982 – 2001) and the Millennial Generation (born 2001 – present) - is of great relevance to careers advisers (Redmond, 2008). In recent years, successful student engagement has resulted from an adaptation of practice to appeal to current student career priorities (such as a greater and genuine desire for work/life balance) and to provide services and virtual resources that acknowledge the availability of information about the graduate labour market that students are likely to have accessed before engaging with a careers service.

iii) Professions vis-a-vis Management

A further change to the work of the professions is the growth of organisational structures, particularly during the twentieth century, which has led to the development of management as an organisational function which can make judgements without specialist knowledge. So for example, the NHS employs medical professionals to treat the patients, but also ‘professional managers’ whose role is to ensure that a hospital or GP practice runs smoothly as an organisation. Those managers are not required to be, for example, a qualified doctor or nurse, themselves. In such a context, a profession – in this case, doctors or nurses – may need to position itself within an organisation as one of a number of groups, rather than automatically being granted the organisational influence they might have previously expected or been accustomed to. This is arguably the case with careers services and careers advisers in higher education where employability has become a high priority and therefore institutional managers who don’t necessarily have specialist knowledge are in a position to make judgements about employability provision.

For professions who operate in the private sector, a change in client group from the public to corporate customers can also result in a shift in position from professional influence to being subject to management control. This is

illustrated by Scott (2008), who uses the example of a professional services firm (such as financial services or architecture) to show how a move to higher-status corporate clients changes a firm from a partnership of qualified professionals to a managed business. In such situations, those in management, rather than the accountants and architects themselves, lead the strategic planning, marketing and overall operation of the business (Hinnings et al. 1999). This highlights a paradox within organisational structures where an increased focus by professionals on their specialist area can reduce their influence upon the organisation as they are less involved in broader business decisions.

Scott's observations on the impact of organisational structures on professional influence resonate strongly with the experience of careers advisers in universities as careers services have broadened their range of activities in response to the employability agenda. A focus on the 'core activities' of careers advice and guidance could be seen to reinforce their position as experts who deploy specialist knowledge. However, careers advisers have also experienced the inverse relationship described by Scott, where their specialist position reduces their influence across the careers service as a whole. Where a careers service now offers a diverse range of services such as placement creation and support, enterprise education, a skills development award and has developed roles to specialise in marketing and technology, the careers adviser voice represents just one area of service delivery and activity. Careers advisers no longer enjoy a position where the organisation of their activities is synonymous with the organisation of the whole service.

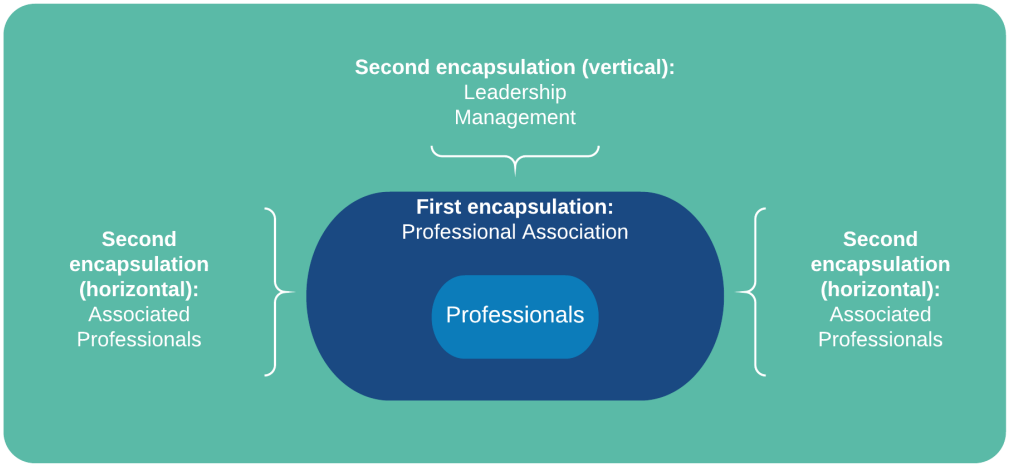
Studies into professions and their response to managerial cultures identify some of the strategies adopted by professions in order to preserve the elite nature and protected status of those within a profession. Parker (2000) in an exploration of organizational culture and identity within an engineering firm identified professional identity as a way in which a profession within an organisation could assert their position as experts to maintain their status and resist management-initiated change. However, when considering professions vis-a-vis management, it is suggested by writers, such as Ackroyd (1996)

and Noordegraaf (2011), that professions might be adopting protectionist behaviours to protect a privileged position, where the privilege is to maintain their position as experts in the deployment of their knowledge and the services provided, rather than in the interests of status alone. Ackroyd suggested that the role of the professional association plays an important part in maintaining this expert position. This is described in more detail below.

1. The role of the Professional Association

Ackroyd (1996) identified "new model professions" as emerging in the twentieth century: professions which are highly organised through their professional association, but also within the organisation in which they work, as a result of which they are doubly encapsulated; once within their professional association and once within their organisation in both a vertical and horizontal form. The organisational encapsulation occurs as the profession is surrounded vertically by tiers of management and horizontally by other professional groups within their organisation. As a result of this, Ackroyd suggested that such professions tend to be inward-looking and to act defensively towards other parts of the organisation. This model is illustrated here:

Figure 1: Professional Encapsulation (Ackroyd, 1996)



There are two emerging tendencies from this double-encapsulation; the first is that within organisations, professional groups work to position their jurisdiction. As a result of this, a hierarchy emerges amongst the professionals with reference to the specific profession to which they belong. The most dominant group(s) act to protect their position at the expense of the others. For example, Stringfellow and Thompson (2014) studied small professional services firms in Scotland which constituted accountants who had qualified through the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Scotland (ICAS) or through the Association of Certified Chartered Accountants (ACCA). Their study indicated that accountants who had qualified through either route perceived the ICAS professionals to belong to a more elite group, although the ACCA-qualified accountants suggested that this would only be the case in Scotland and that the situation was changing. This hierarchy originates in part from the fact that ICAS was the world's first professional body for accountants, granted a royal charter in 1854.

Similarly, careers advisers in higher education might find themselves feeling under pressure to position themselves as possessing a higher level of skill within their own service, as well as their institution, as they find themselves working alongside a diversified group of 'employability professionals', perhaps, for example, attempting to place guidance 'above' placement development or careers service marketing.

Ackroyd also identified a more positive tendency within organisations for professional groups to work with each other where mutual benefit could be identified. For example, in a professional services firm, a specialist such as an actuary will need regular recourse to the legal department to ensure that their correspondence with clients is appropriately compliant with legislation. By offering their expert opinion to the actuary, the legal professional is fulfilling their role within the firm, however the key relationship that a client has with the firm is through the actuary, not as a result of direct contact with the qualified solicitors. For careers advisers, an equivalent positive partnership might be to offer guidance to students going out on placement as part of a placement preparation programme or, across the institution or to

provide graduate destination information to academic colleagues to support their student recruitment activity.

2. The rise of Professional Managers

The distinction between a profession and organisational management is a theme across literature that considers professions in both the private and the public sector. Ackroyd like Scott (2008), notes the rise of management as a profession and goes on to suggest that it is "...an interesting common feature of UK professions, whether in the public or private sectors, that they do not assume that their expertise extends to management." (Ackroyd,1996:611). Ackroyd does, however, suggest that in the private sector (he uses the example of engineering), this occurs as the professions are not sufficiently entrepreneurial to seek or to be allowed to take on management functions. By contrast, in the public sector, he suggests that the opportunities have been there, but that the professions (for example teaching, social work and medical professions) have not taken sufficient advantage of their position to take on management functions and by implication, control of their profession.

By stating this view, Ackroyd seems to assume that entrepreneurialism is not a feature of public sector management and takes a somewhat jaundiced view of professionals in the public sector implying that they have rejected management opportunities that were available to them. This, perhaps, also suggests a lack of insight into the perspectives of professionals in the public sector, whose primary motivation is often to provide a service, rather than to run a profit-making organisation or focus their work on the management of an organisation.

Noordegraaf (2011) recognised the impact of neo-liberal politics and reforms to the welfare state as a result of which many public service professions operate within organisations and are required to deliver 'value for money' services in a market setting. This applies also to higher education where institutions operate in an increasingly competitive environment, with a reliance on bringing in income through student tuition fees, which privileges league table positions as a measure of 'success'. In such contexts, Noordegraaf noted a growing and unhelpful dualism of "'occupations versus

organisations' and 'managers versus professionals'" in the analysis of professions (Noordegraaf, 2011:1350). This dualism is illustrated by Ackroyd (1996) above. Noordegraaf called for more integrated approaches to 'professions and organisations' and 'managers and professionals' fully to explore the development of professions within organisations. As examples of this, he cited Cooper and Robson (2006), whose study of accountancy identified organisations as a site within which professional regulation is enacted and Waring and Currie (2009) whose study within the UK medical profession showed that, in order to maintain their influence, professionals themselves, adopted managerial approaches, rather than resisting management by stressing the values and behaviours of the profession itself.

In response to the realities and pressures of public services, Noordegraaf suggested the concept of "organized professionalism". This is the delivery of professional work by "management minded professionals" who see tasks such as planning and resource allocation as professional issues (Noordegraaf, 2011:1358). He suggested that this can be effective in environments where resources are scarce and where aspects of service, such as efficiency, co-operation and reputation management, are considered to be of primary importance to professionals. This resonates with Broadbent et al (1997) who suggested that the way to reconcile organisational imperatives with autonomous professional work is "to characterise top management as change agents not professionals and not as definers of the professional task." (Broadbent et al,1997:9). They identify three tensions that need to be addressed to achieve a reconciliation between organisational imperatives and professional values and practice:(1) to accommodate professional autonomy as well as to strive for strategic control; (2) to support the development of professional identity alongside organisational identity and (3) to respect established professional practice, rather than focus only on changing practice to support organisational ambitions.

Knights and Gleeson (2006) recognised the tension between professional and managerial perspectives described by Broadbent et al, above, but suggested that the process of managing this tension enables the creation of professional knowledge in the public sector. This process, Creative

Mediation, enables the profession and the professionals within it to reconcile public professionalism with a neo-liberal managerial culture; rather than be placed under pressure to get results, ways are found to make the targets work for the profession. This approach is illustrated with an example of a lecturer in a further education college who introduced the use of text messaging to keep in touch with their students; this balanced a management need for absence monitoring with the lecturer's ambition to support the students through their studies by establishing a regular and immediate connection. Knights and Gleeson conclude that "it would be a mistake to assume that professionals are passive or simply self-serving when dealing with externally imposed forms of performance management or surveillance" (Knight and Gleeson, 2006:285) although their representation of management imperatives as 'performance management or surveillance' perhaps indicates a less balanced perspective than that which they advocated.

Organised professionalism and creative mediation are pragmatic responses to the tensions which exist within publicly accountable organisations which are operating within an increasingly commercial framework. There are examples of organised professionalism and support for creative mediation within careers services in higher education where the head of the service, themselves, has a background as a careers adviser. In larger services, functional and team management roles offer careers advisers the opportunity to approach their work as management minded professionals while, as practitioners, incorporating their management perspective into the delivery of services. Instances of this have proved to be an effective approach to the development of careers services. At the time of writing, there are a distinct group of careers services which in recent years have enjoyed a strong institutional position and been regularly recognised through national awards by AGCAS, The Times Higher, The Guardian and the Association of Graduate Recruiters for sector-leading careers and employability activity. These are services which have leaders and managers who are, typically, former careers advisers.

Having considered careers advisers in higher education in the context of the nature and purpose of a profession, the challenges they face through technological and societal changes, their organisational position and the impact of a growing managerial culture through the lens of academic literature, the next section of this chapter focuses on the essence of this study –the understanding of professional identity.

2.4 Perspectives on Individual Professional Identity

This research seeks to understand the professional identity of careers advisers as a group through understanding the professional identity of a number of individual careers advisers. This study is an exploration of participants' work-related identity rather than individual identity in the heavily theoretical sense, for example using a Psychoanalysis approach. It is, therefore, appropriate to place professional identity in the context of lenses that have been used by academics and others previously in an organisational context. Such lenses are relevant to this study, because, in addition to the connection to their university and careers service, careers advisers in different universities can, through membership and active professional networking within AGCAS, be considered a sufficiently connected group across the sector for these perspectives to apply. This resonates with Alvesson et al who suggested that "identity in its various conceptualizations offers creative ways to understand a range of organizational settings and phenomena while bridging the levels of micro to macro." (Alvesson et al, 2008:7). It may be helpful, when reading this section of the chapter, to bear in mind that professional identity in the context of this study is 'the experience and self-understanding of those fulfilling a particular occupational role' and of Cornelisson's (2006) observation that organisational identity can be seen as a metaphor which is understood in different ways depending on the theoretical perspective being applied.

Alvesson et al (2008) identified three meta-theoretical orientations across existing identity studies within organisations. They aligned with Habermas'(1972) three cognitive interests which underlie human enquiry. For each orientation, they then identified a broad theoretical perspective.

Alvesson et al acknowledged that this is a “simple classification”, but it provides a helpful framework within which to consider ways in which identity within organisations has been explored. These meta-theoretical orientations and their allied theoretical perspective are outlined below:

(1) Technical (allied to Functional) research aims to build a knowledge of identity to inform management approaches to achieve organisational outcomes. The theoretical perspective aligned with this is Social Identity Theory, which considers the individual as embedded within, or defined by, social groups and is often used to understand how people position and see themselves in relation to other groups (taking an in-group, out-group perspective).

(2) Practical-Hermeneutic research aims to understand identity through a process of meaning-making that increases understanding of the relationship between the self, work and organisation. The theoretical perspective they suggest is aligned with this is that of “Identity Work”: “the ongoing mental activity that an individual undertakes in constructing an understanding of self that is coherent, distinct and positively valued.” (Alvesson et al, 2008: 15).

(3) Emancipatory research aims to increase agency through identity by focussing on the impact of (organisational) power on identity construction. The theoretical perspective is critical, exploring organisationally-driven “identity work” as a form of identity control which may prioritise the interests of the organisation over the individual.

Of these three orientations, this study aligns most closely with Practical-Hermeneutic research and the theoretical perspective of “Identity Work” as the aim is to understand the professional identity of careers advisers. However, as I will be suggesting recommendations for careers service leaders and managers in order to realise the full potential of careers advisers within their services, this study could also be seen as Technical research. The purpose of the recommendations is to support the role of careers

advisers within universities, not only in the interests of careers advisers, but in order to meet the organisational outcome of high levels of employability for students and graduates. The findings could also reflect a critical Emancipatory perspective in that I have observed a lack of institutional recognition of the careers adviser role in some settings, where greater recognition of the role and the careers adviser contribution to employability outcomes may lead to greater agency for careers advisers within their service and institution. In identifying these three orientations, Alvesson et al call for a development of organizational studies of identity "from streams of largely disconnected work to a more engaged conversation across metatheoretical lenses." (Alvesson et al, 2008: 9). This study reflects such engagement taking a Practical-Hermeneutic approach with a Technical and potentially Emancipatory orientation.

Kenny et al (2011) identified six theories of identity which have been influential in organisational studies. The Psychoanalysis, Foucaldian, Micro-Interactionist and Symbolic Interactionist approaches while interesting of themselves, do not have resonance with this study. The remaining two – the Narrative perspective and Social Identity Theory are relevant to this study, because, as Kenny suggested, they resonate with a social constructionist view of identity formation. Identity is developed through social interactions (an individual's Social Identity) and the narrative that an individual constructs of their own identity (an individual's Personal Identity). This is the type of identity formation being used in this study.

Such perspectives also suggest that identity is fluid and is influenced by interaction with others and by membership of a group or groups (Gaskell and Leadbetter, 2009, Antaki and Widdecombe, 1998, Turner and Brown, 1978). The social constructionist approach to professional identity formation suggests that professional identity is developed through social interactions which shape individual behaviour (Burr 2003, Busher, 2005). This further confirms that this is an appropriate perspective for this study as, through observation, as a manager of careers advisers, and through personal experience, socialisation and group-identification are defining features of the work of a careers adviser in higher education. Careers advisers identify

strongly with their fellow-advisers within a careers service, but also work in collaboration with careers advisers in other universities through participation in AGCAS activities.

There are theories of identity formation, which focus on the level of commitment that an individual feels towards a group. Lewis and Crisp (2004) suggested that a strong commitment to a group will be a source of satisfaction and self-esteem. However Branscombe et al (1999) suggested that if the values or distinctiveness of a group are threatened, the effect on individual identity relates to the extent to which that individual identifies with a group. They suggested that individuals, who identify with a group, increase their commitment in the face of a group threat which in turn increases group influence on individual identity. Equally, they suggest that a 'low-identifying' individual experiences a weaker commitment to the group and, therefore, less group impact on their own identity. This suggests a 'virtuous circle' of individual and collective professional identity; a strong affiliation to a professional group will provide esteem when things are going well and encourage stronger affiliation when the group is under threat. If an individual feels less affiliation, it is suggested that a group threat weakens the influence that group has on the individual's professional identity.

For those within a profession which requires structured, accredited education and training, the interactions which establish a sense of 'group' start as soon as new entrants to the profession begin to train. Hall (2005) suggested that the culture of each profession, and therefore the identity of the professionals within it, is built on a cognitive map which is developed through the education and socialisation of students. This shared professional identity is further strengthened by the fact that a profession will attract individuals with particular cognitive learning skills and styles, which are reinforced further by those leading the training, selecting candidates with those particular skills and styles and choosing methods of education to suit them. This "professional socialisation" also occurs through the instilling of values as part of the training process. Hall described this aspect of the training as "internalised and largely unspoken"(Hall, 2005:191) which suggests that those who have not undergone such training will be unable to access

elements of the shared understanding that exists between a group of professionals as it is not easily available. This dimension of professional identity will contribute to the tension between managers who are not drawn from a profession and the professionals themselves, leading to the issues around 'professions vis-à-vis management' discussed above.

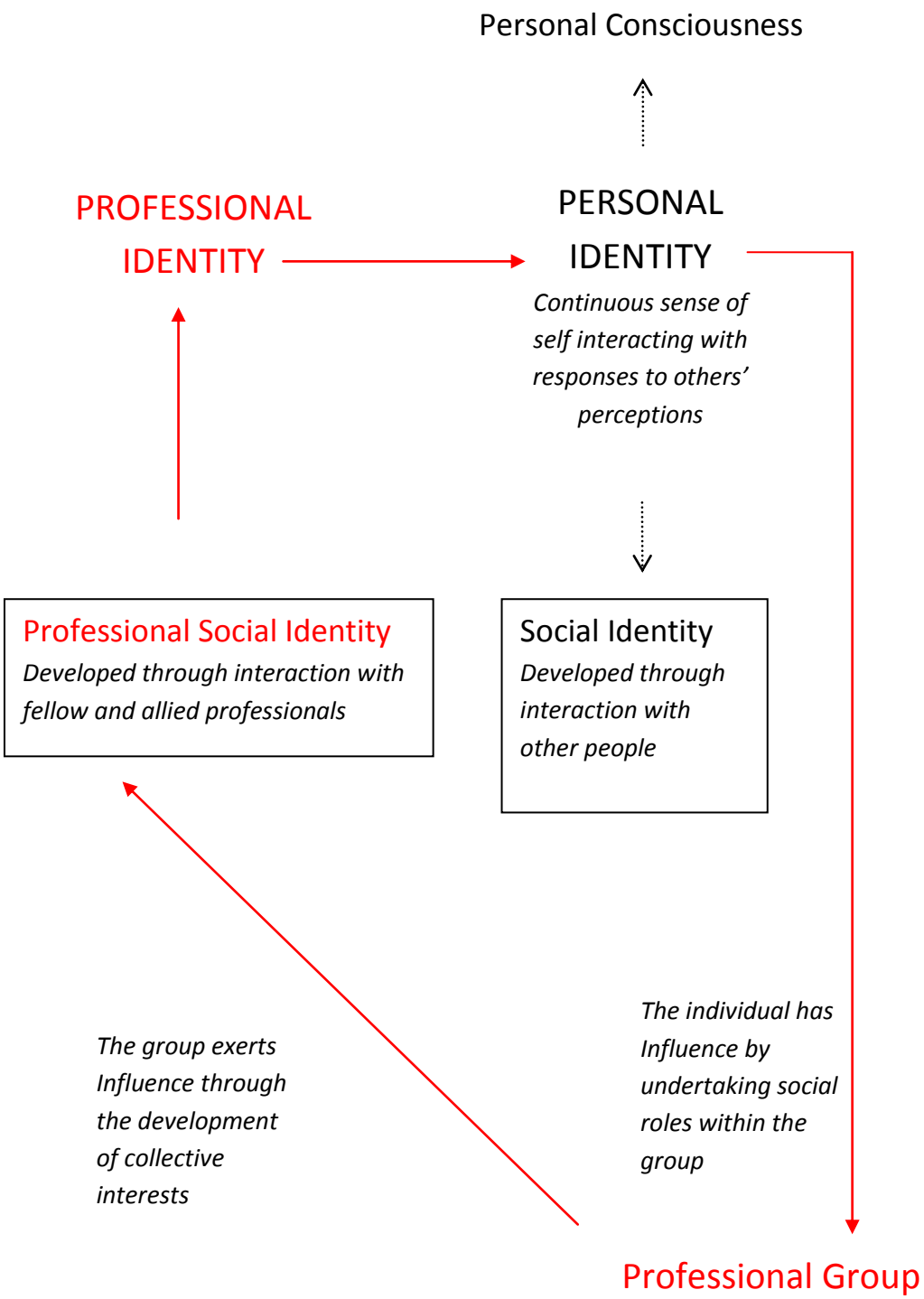
Drawing on this discussion, as a careers adviser myself, I recognise the concept of professional socialisation through my own experience of working in higher education careers services. Having completed the Diploma in Careers Guidance (DipCG) at the outset of my career, I have experienced the shared understanding between colleagues who followed the same route. As only fourteen institutions offered the DipCG at the point at which I trained, it is almost always possible to identify mutual acquaintances by tracing career paths from DipCG courses through local authorities into higher education. This has strengthened and enabled my network within higher education and facilitates my ongoing professional socialisation within higher education. For example, at the time of writing, I am closely connected to a number of heads of careers service, the majority of who completed a DipCG and are in Russell Group institutions.

The strength of this socialisation can also be seen in careers services which have experienced significant organisational change in recent years. In some cases, careers advisers are being positively recognised and in others they feel threatened. Through my network and my experience of my current institution, I am aware that where groups of established careers advisers who have experienced common routes into the profession perceive a 'threat' to their role, their sense of group identity has increased, resonating with the observations of Branscombe et al (1999), above. This can result in behaviour which challenges the careers service leaders who are trying to implement change. The recurrence of this scenario across higher education careers services in recent years is one reason why this study is being undertaken – to understand the collective professional identity of careers advisers in order to support careers service leaders in optimising their contribution through times of change.

Having identified a social constructionist perspective as appropriate for this study, this section now goes on to consider the development of individual professional identity in the context of a professional group.

Payne (2006) considered the development of individual professional identity in the context of a professional group by drawing parallels with personal identity development. He describes personal identity as an interaction between personal consciousness and a social identity, where social identity is the element of individual identity shaped through interaction with others. He suggested that a professional identity therefore is that individual's personal identity interacting with a particular form of social identity, i.e. interaction with fellow-professionals. Reflecting the fact that a profession is made up of, and is influenced by, the professionals within it, Payne therefore suggested a further dimension to the development of professional identity by suggesting that there is an interplay between personal identity, the impact of the personal identity on the professional group and the impact of the professional group on the social identity of an individual. This is illustrated in the figure below where the red arrows and headings denote his suggested process of professional identity formation.

Figure 2. Individual Professional Identity Development (representing Payne, 2006).



This process illustrates the way in which an individual's professional identity is an interplay between their individual personal and social identity which is shaped and reinforced by interactions with others within their profession; a professional shapes the profession and is shaped by being part of that profession. Thus, the process is mutually reinforcing. This echoes Hall's (2005) concept of professional socialisation and a profession as a group of professionals drawn together with and through common traits and values. The identity of the group is reinforced through an increased intertwining of personal and professional identities.

This process represents the construction of professional identity as one aspect of an individual's identity. This resonates with the work of Colley and James (2005), who when considering the professional identity of tutors in Further Education colleges noted that an individual's professional identity does not exist in a vacuum, but is interwoven with that individual's personal and political identities. The relationship between personal and professional identities, mediated by the influence of the professional group was also identified in an investigation into the professional identity development of new counsellors. They referred to themselves as professionals, integrated their skills and attitudes to establish their professional identity and recognised that this took place in the context of their professional community (Gibson et al, 2010).

This conceptualisation of professional identity construction also illustrates the changing nature of professional identity as individuals and work contexts evolve. Following their study into discourses of profession amongst architects Cohen et al observed "An analysis of how individuals talk about their work reveals a picture that is less about whole-sale change, and more negotiation and accommodation. It illuminates the elasticity of notions of professional work, and how situated individuals construct versions of their work that make sense and are viable at particular moments in time." (Cohen et al, 2005: 793).

Payne (2006) outlined the interplay between the personal, social and professional identity (Fig 2, above) in the context of the professional identity

of social workers working in multi-professional teams. For him, the phenomenon of a professional group influenced by personal identity which then influences interactions between fellow professionals and with allied professionals was significant. It suggested that in the same way that a professional shapes their profession and is shaped by being part of that profession, an individual profession can shape an allied profession and is shaped by professionals working as members of a multi-professional team. This is relevant to this study as careers advisers work in partnership with academics, professional service colleagues and graduate recruiters in order to fulfil their role. Following Payne's model, through their interactions with careers advisers, academics, professional service colleagues and graduate recruiters will be influencing the professional identity of careers advisers.

This section has considered professional identity and discussed the impact that interaction with others and membership of a group has on individual identity. The theories of identity construction which have been influential within organisational studies suggest that a social constructionist perspective on professional identity is most appropriate for this study; careers advisers have a strong tradition of professional socialisation amongst themselves and their group identity and interactions with that group will shape individual professional identity. Having considered perspectives on individual professional identity development the following section looks at collective professional identity.

2.5 Collective Professional Identity in Context

While it is possible to define shared characteristics of a profession and suggest a process through which an individual develops a professional identity, studies to determine a collective professional identity for a particular group, perhaps reflecting the challenge of defining professional identity, have proved more complex. The work which has been undertaken in this area is discussed here.

a. Studies of the identity of a profession

Studies, which have explored the identity of a profession, have adopted a number of approaches. One is to consider the extent to which there is a shared understanding of the concept of 'professionalism', i.e. the competence or skill expected of a professional (Oxford English Dictionary, 2015). In a qualitative study, Van de Camp et al (2009) undertook a literature review of studies which had explored the concept of professionalism amongst doctors. Three themes emerged; Interpersonal Professionalism, Public Professionalism and Intra-Personal Professionalism (referring to interactions with allied health professionals). However, they concluded that there was no consensus within the medical community about what constituted professionalism. Blackall et al (2007) used the determinates of professionalism laid out by the American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM)(1994) to develop an instrument to assess the impact of professional socialisation within medical training on the development of medical professionalism. The ABIM elements of professionalism are Altruism, Accountability, Excellence, Duty, Honour and Integrity and Respect for Others. The study identified a seventh element, Enrichment. However, these elements seem to represent attitudes and values rather than competencies, skills or indeed identities.

These studies do not take into account possible differences in professional identity based on the practice of a profession in different settings. For example, a study into the discourses of profession developed by architects working in private and public practice (Cohen et al, 2005) provided greater insight into the differences between professional practice in the private and public sectors. Creative endeavour emerges as the defining motivation to practice architecture, while architecture is also conceptualised as a business practice and a public service. Architects in private practice articulated a discourse which suggested a hierarchical tension between creative endeavour and business priorities. They also described the challenge of a focus on professional practice vis-à-vis influence within the broader business organisation; professional work that reflects architectural values in the broader context of a construction project can be perceived as niche and as

adding additional time and cost, rather than creative value. Architects in private practice recognised that career progress was likely to result in 'leaving behind' creative practice in order to focus on business development so that the firm could remain solvent.

In contrast, architects in the public sector saw their work as contributing to the public good and that creative endeavour was the means to achieve that. There was a sense that they rejected the business imperative of making money as it did not resonate with the values of the architects who had chosen to work in the public sector.

Cohen et al suggested that the three discourses identified for architecture; creative endeavour, business imperative and a public service, can be viewed more generally as "expertise, business constraints and social values" (Cohen et al, 2005:793). They suggested that these discourses could be applied to other professional communities as the way in which they understand their professional work. These discourses resonate with the challenge of reconciling organisational imperatives with professional work and Noordegraaf's "organized professionalism" which is discussed above.

Kitay and Wright (2007) conducted a study into the way in which management consultants perceived their role and from the responses identified five different meanings: professional, prophet, partner, business person and service worker. This suggests that a professional identity is an 'occupational rhetoric'; an individual interpretation of the role, in this case reflecting the setting in which they work. In a study into the work-related identity of restaurant chefs, Fine (1996) identified four emerging identities which reflected the individual identities involved: professionals, artists, businessmen and manual labourers. Again, being a professional appeared as one of a number of conceptualisations and was not directly related to the features of a profession discussed in section 3 (b) (i) of this chapter, for example, solving a problem using highly specialised knowledge and gaining qualifications to do so from academically credentialed institutions. The use of the word 'professional' in these studies demonstrates the extent to which the term is used fluidly and is open to multiple interpretations.

Beijard et al (2004) reconsidered the research which has been undertaken into the professional identity of teachers. They suggested that identity can be seen as the ongoing response to the question "who am I at this moment?" (Bejiard et al, 2004:100). They noted different conceptualisations of professional identity for teachers; that their particular role influences their professional identity (Goodson and Cole, 1994, Volkmann and Anderson, 1998) and that their professional identity is a combination of a teacher's personal background, what they consider to be professionally important and the understanding and expectation of others of the role of a teacher (Tickle, 2000). Responding to educational changes also influences teachers' identity as their concepts of how they see themselves develop as they approach those changes (Knowles, 1992; Nias, 1989).

Reviewing 22 studies of professional identity undertaken between 1998 and 2000, Beijard et al (2004) noted that in three out of nine studies on professional identity formation, no explicit definition of professional identity was given. This was also the case in six out of 11 studies which explored the characteristics of professional identity amongst teachers. Across the studies into the characteristics of professional identity, no clear shared professional identity emerged. The final two studies considered the way in which professional identity amongst teachers can be presented.

From these studies, Beijard et al (2004) drew together four features of teacher professional identity: that professional identity is a process of interpretation and re-interpretation, that professional identity is developed as a result of the individual and the context in which they are operating and thirdly, that professional identity is a harmonisation of a number of sub-identities which are developed through the experience of different contexts and relationships. These features resonate with the model suggested by Payne (2006), above. The fourth feature identified by Beijard et al citing Coldron and Smith (1999) was that Agency makes an important contribution to professional identity, i.e. an active involvement in professional development.

Beijard et al's (2004) own suggestion based on their study was that professional identity formation is a process of practical knowledge-building which is characterised by an ongoing integration of what is individually and collectively seen as relevant to teaching. This resonates with a social constructionist perspective on professional identity and with Sachs (2001) who cites Wenger (1998) when recognising the reflexive relationship between identity and practice.

The ownership and development of knowledge, recognised as a feature of a profession, is also identified as feature of professional identity for early years professionals. Dalli (2008) surveyed 594 practitioners who were qualified to the level of a three year degree, diploma or equivalent about their perspective on professionalism and concluded that the essential components of professionalism for early years' professionals are to have a distinct pedagogy, specialist knowledge and practices and collaborative relationships. Also investigating professionalism in this field, Adams (2008) cited Beck and Young (2005) who suggested that feeling part of a profession is related to an inner dedication by those who share recognisable knowledge and have a similar occupation.

Careers advisers in higher education work closely with academics, who, as discussed above in section 4 of this chapter, will, therefore, have influence on their professional identity. It is therefore important to understand the professional identity of academics. When considering the features of a profession, Torstendahl (1990) distinguishes academics from other professions, suggesting that rather than solve a problem which is recognised by the public, academics tend to define their own problems to solve and defend their autonomy to do so as a tenet of their professional practice. He suggests that this leads to less of a sense of 'group' among academics as, unlike other professions, their clients or employers will not be able to reinforce a sense of shared knowledge and practice when interacting with them. Becher and Trowler (2001) reflect the importance of a research area to an academic citing Henkel (2000) and Sax et al (1999) in the observation that academic researchers are motivated by a wish to make a significant contribution to their field of research and to be recognised for that. They also

note that success as an academic is strongly linked to the publication of research findings and much less to success in Learning and Teaching activity.

Jawitz (2009) suggested that the discipline of the academic, but also the institution in which they work, play an important part in the development of an academic professional identity. Becher and Trowler's view of academic life is that "nearly everything is graded in more or less subtle ways." (2001:81). They suggested that there is a subject 'pecking order' and even a hierarchy of specialism within a subject. In their words: "Roughly speaking, hard knowledge domains are regarded more highly than soft ones and pure than applied [sic]. Within what might be called, in sociological parlance, the more stratified disciplines (those with clearly marked internal status distinctions), certain fields of activity are seen as prestigious and others as less so. In general, theoreticians are reckoned to have to deal with the more difficult intellectual tasks." (2001:81).

Becher and Trowler's account of academic life emphasised the individual nature and the importance of context for academic professional identity. They suggested that self-promotion and involvement in subject networks are important contributors to academic success, although Jawitz (2009) suggested that even within communities of practice there are tensions which shape academic identity. Becher and Trowler also suggested that institutional credibility has an impact on academic recognition (another example of 'grading'). They also went on to suggest that the nature of the institution within which an academic works will affect the construct of their role, with those in 'non-elite' institutions perhaps encouraged to see the role as more student-centred, with a greater value placed on student interaction.

Archer (2008) observed that the neo-liberal approach to public management described above in section 2 of this chapter has also had an impact on higher education and the role of academics; research outputs are counted and measured and more questions are asked about the economic value and impact of their work. The role of the academic is further under the spotlight following the introduction of undergraduate tuition fees in England following

the Browne Review in 2010. This has brought with it greater expectations by institutions, students and parents of the academic role in the student experience. As a result of this, the distinction that is made by Becher and Trowler between the value of student interaction in elite and non-elite institutions is less than it might previously have been. However, Archer's (2008) study into younger academics' constructions of 'authenticity', 'success' and professional identity supported Becher and Trowler's view that academics are primarily motivated to make a contribution to their field of research despite challenges within the nature of academic life.

These insights into the professional identity of academics suggest that the institution, discipline and focus of the particular academics with whom careers advisers interact, will shape the way in which that interaction is framed. Depending on the nature of their institution and stage of career, engagement with careers advisers and the employability agenda is likely, for academics, to sit somewhere between a welcome aspect to student interaction that offers opportunity for career enhancement and a lesser status distraction from a highly valued research focus. This will influence the nature of the interaction and therefore the impact that working with academics will have on the professional identity of a careers adviser.

The examples outlined above from a range of professions, demonstrate the variety of ways in which the identity of a profession is shaped by the professionals within it and the context in which it operates. Studies into professional identity also highlight the challenges which some professions face and these are discussed below.

b. Challenges to professional identity

Understanding the nature of the specialist knowledge required to fulfil a professional role makes a significant contribution to public understanding of that profession and therefore the professional identity of those within it. An absence of public understanding therefore undermines professional identity. This is illustrated by a study of community mental health nurses which indicated that the challenge of defining the knowledge required to fulfil their

roles undermined their professional identity as the public could not easily recognise their expertise and therefore recognise them as professionals (Crawford et al, 2008).

The experience of some professions demonstrates the impact that job title has on the public perception and understanding of a role, and therefore professional identity. This can be because, as in the area of early years' professionals, there are a range of job titles which undermine the focus on the professional role (Adams, 2008). Reflecting further on the impact of job titles on the professional identity of those working as early years professionals, Adams observed: "It would be also important that the profession is clear about what workers are doing with young children: doctors practice medicine, lawyers practice law, but it is children who practice childhood. The adult working with the child is practicing care and education. Yet, in many of the new early years' job titles, a clear statement of the educative role of the job is missing and this could well be central to the struggle of professionalism in the sector." (Adams, 2008:2000).

Careers advisers across higher education experience this challenge as their role can be differently titled; careers adviser, careers consultant and career development adviser are just three that I am familiar with. It could also be argued that none of these titles convey the full breadth of expertise that careers advisers deploy given an absence of reference to application and selection process coaching and support.

Studies into the identity of professions suggest that there can be a link between a focus on the client, the public perception of the client and the way in which a profession is therefore perceived. This public perception, in turn, affects the professional identity of those within that profession. This can be a positive process, for example, Scott (2008) referred to the rise in organisational power for financial and legal professionals as their client focus moved from the individual to corporate clients. The association with influential private organisations has had a positive impact on those working for professional service firms. It is interesting to compare this with a 'high street' solicitor or accountant providing services to the public, who are not

always perceived to have the same status as their corporate counterparts as they are 'only' dealing with the general public. In this example, the public association with solving recognisable problems actually undermines professional identity, perhaps because such professionals are more accessible. This resonates with the 'protectionist' approach to the organisation of certain professional roles (for example a barrister or surgeon) where scarcity helps those particular professionals to have a higher status than even those in the same professional area (i.e. solicitors and general practitioners).

The impact of client focus on professional identity can also be seen amongst professions generally recognised as 'caring professions' and whose roles align more closely with that of a careers adviser in terms of training routes and motivation to join a profession in order to help people. Nursing provides a helpful illustration of this. Many nurses are strongly motivated by doing what is best for their patients (Fagermoen, 1997, Rhodes et al, 2011). However, that strong association does not always support their professional profile. Gardner (1992) identified a conflict between caring - a focus on the well-being of the patient - and professionalization, which is cast as working to protect the interests of the nurses, implicitly at the expense of their patients. Faced with this 'choice', many nurses feel compelled to choose their patients over working to enhance their own professional recognition, thus prioritising their ethical drive to fulfil their role. It may also be that nurses veer away from a professional stance as the higher status may make them less approachable to their patients, as doctors are commonly perceived to be in relation to nurses.

Associated with this, is the impact that the status or perception of those patients has on the professional identity of nurses. Writing about their professional identity, Tschudin (1999) described nurses as having "a drive to make people better and therefore to leave humanity generally in a better (or healthier) position than they found it in." (1999:8). However she also noted that their patient focus leads to negative associations; "Nurses deal day in and day out with bodies, particularly with what comes out of them, which generally smells and is unsightly, so that they become linked with sights,

smells and sounds that people tend to avoid.....The care receivers are frequently also either infants or tend to be infantilised (Tronto, 1993, p.170), diminishing the role of the care givers even further." (Tschudin 1999:3). This phenomenon can also be seen in a study into community mental health nurses who also expressed a strong client focus as part of their professional identity construct (Crawford et al, 2008); their clients are vulnerable and historically there has been a reluctance amongst the public to acknowledge mental illness. An association between those with mental health issues and the professionals who care for them could undermine the professional identity of that group through public perception.

There are parallels here with careers advisers in higher education and the way in which they are perceived by their 'public' - students and academics within institutions and, externally, graduate recruiters. Traditionally, careers advisers have worked more with students who do not know what they want to do when they complete their courses, rather than those who are studying to enter an established profession such as medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, pharmacy, engineering, law and so on. If they do deal with these courses, careers advisers are most likely to work with the students who are either struggling to get into that area of work or who have decided that it is not the career path for them. This means that careers advisers could be associated with those perceived to be lower achievers or 'failures' within those professional areas. Within non-vocational academic disciplines many of the career paths which students will follow are relatively unknown and, therefore, may not be deemed to be of such high status. It could be argued that traditionally this has placed careers advisers at a disadvantage in gaining external recognition to affirm their professional identity, although the increased interest in employability across all subject disciplines may be changing this.

The professions that illustrate the challenges to the identity of a professional group are largely those which have developed and which operate within the public services. This perhaps also reflects the fact that control of their structure, routes into practice, qualification paths and, increasingly client focus, are determined through government policy rather than being controlled

by the profession itself. In recent years, this has also led to areas of such professions' responsibility being available for delivery by private contractors, for example, the introduction of a new public sector probation service for England in 2014 focuses the responsibility for high risk offenders on the probation service, while opportunities to rehabilitate low-risk offenders are opened up to private providers working in partnership with voluntary, community and enterprise providers (Lindsay and Sandhu, 2014). This structure limits the area of expertise for those in the probation service and places their focus on the highest-risk offenders. This has the potential to lead to the inverse relationship between specialism and influence suggested by Hinnings et al (1999) in relation to professions and organisations. The compartmentalisation of the client group and range of providers involved in delivery of the service will remove the use of a single job title to represent those who carry out this work. This will make it difficult for the role of a probation worker to be recognised and valued by the public. The probation service has also seen changes to the nature and level of qualification required to be a probation officer. Until 1997, probation officers were required to have the same qualification as a social worker; an honours degree or equivalent, and a two year Diploma in Social Work. However, following a period where the probation service developed their own Diploma in Probation Studies, the government have introduced a new qualifications framework, which combines academic study and work-based learning, but it is not mandatory for those providing probation services to have a particular qualification; other professional and vocational qualifications are also accepted (Lindsay and Sandhu, 2014). Such a dispersal of qualification routes sits in sharp contrast to the controlled admission and entry routes to practice in long-established professions and can be seen to undermine the professional identity of probation workers as there is a much stronger sense that "anyone can do it".

The developments within the probation service have parallels with the role of careers advisers in some careers services, where roles such as the employability development officer (Appendix 1) limit the scope of careers advisers' work, increasing their specialism and potentially decreasing their

influence. The change in qualifications required (in some cases, no longer requiring a degree or professional qualification in order to work with students) also suggest that a lower level of qualification in educational terms is required in order to fulfil the role. In my own experience of leading a large careers service in which such roles exist (they were created before I took up the role), multiple job titles within careers services also make it harder for those outside a service to understand the level of support and expertise deployed by a careers adviser.

c. The impact of multi-professional teams on professional identity

There has been a growing belief by successive governments since the 1990s that inter-professional working, i.e. collaborative practices, will improve the quality of health and social care services (Thomas et al, 2014). This belief is not restricted to health and social care services as the experience of Connexions showed: there a combination of educational and social services were brought together in an attempt to provide holistic support to young people. Within higher education, careers advisers have always worked, or attempted to work, closely with academics and other professional services, in order to fulfil their role and as the employability agenda has developed within higher education, many careers services themselves have evolved into multi-professional teams.

Referring back to figure 2 in section 2.4 of this chapter, Payne (2006) suggested that a multi-professional team is a site where each member's own professional identity is shaped by working with other professionals. At the same time through their personal identity, they act as an agent of that multi-professional team to shape their own profession.

The assumption in this model is that the professionals within the group feel confident about their own professional identity. In an exploration of inter-professional team working, Molyneaux (2001) suggested that without "professional adulthood", i.e. a confidence in one's own role and professional identity (Laidler, 1991), inter-professional working can lead to conflict. Baxter and Brumfitt (2008), perhaps, take a more pragmatic view that

organisational factors such as team size and the regularity of communication are as important in establishing an inter-professional team as professional identity.

A further 'condition' for successful inter-professional working is that power is shared and that there is a sense of parity between the professional groups so that all those within the team have a voice when determining how work will be conducted (Meads and Ashcroft, 2005, cited in Thomas et al, 2014). In a study of a multi-professional team working at a newly established rehabilitation clinic, one of the reasons for success was that all team members worked to develop equal relationships and to ensure a balance within the team (Molyneaux, 2001) regardless of whether the team member was a doctor or an allied health professional. This was supported by strong communication within the team and the development of creative working methods made possible by the sharing of professional knowledge and practice.

By contrast, studies into the work of multi-professional teams in surgical operating theatres demonstrate the impact of differential status between team members (in this context, surgeons and anaesthetists compared with operating department practitioners and nurses). Chattopadhyay et al (2010) and Finn (2008) reported a difference in motivation between clinicians who wish to control the environment while deploying their skills and allied professionals who gain satisfaction from enabling the theatre and surgical procedures to run smoothly. In both studies, tensions were reported. Chattopadhyay et al (2010) noted that a greater number of clinicians in a theatre setting induced competition which manifested itself in accusations of incompetence and unprofessional behaviours amongst themselves. This had a negative impact on the ability of the nurses to ensure that theatres ran smoothly, and, it is suggested, a negative impact on their sense of status. Chattophadyay et al suggested that nurses accept that their status is lower than surgeons and therefore rely on association with a successfully run theatre to raise their status. By contrast, Finn (2008) suggested that tensions arise because operating department practitioners do not accept this lower status, but tolerate it while envisioning effective teamwork as "egalitarian

working with surgeons and anaesthetists in terms of the distribution of esteem." (Finn, 2008:117).

The positive impacts of working in a multi-professional team are illustrated through the impact of multi-agency working on the professional identity of educational psychologists. Although initially unclear, the role of an educational psychologist emerged with clarity as a result of 'finding their place' within a multi-agency team while professional identity as a psychologist was strengthened in the mixed setting alongside some reconsideration of the nature of the role. It was reported that there were greater opportunities to be creative with their practice and to develop their skill and many educational psychologists expressed a greater sense of being valued in multi-professional team than in a group of their own peers (Gaskell and Leadbetter, 2009).

These studies suggest that the experience of working in a multi-professional team and the resultant perception of relative status between careers advisers, academics and other professional services colleagues will influence the professional identity of careers advisers. The extent to which careers adviser accepts or feels made to accept a lower status than academics, following Chattopadhyay (2010), or envisages and experiences the more egalitarian approach to multi-professional team working described by Finn (2008) will have a positive or negative impact on their professional identity. The insights into the professional identity of an academic as outlined above indicate an identity shaped by the following factors in order of impact; subject, disciplinary network, institutional status and institutional expectation. The relative priority that some academics might give to institutional matters, such as employability, will influence the way in which they interact with careers advisers which could have a negative impact on the professional identity of careers advisers.

Having considered professional identity across a range of professions, the final section in this chapter looks at existing research into the professional identity of careers advisers in higher education.

2.6 Studies of the identity of Careers Advisers in Higher Education

As stated at the start of this thesis, there are very few studies into the professional identity of careers advisers in higher education and this thesis aims to make a contribution to this field of knowledge. Studies have been undertaken to explore the professional identity of careers advisers working outside higher education. Following the introduction of the Connexions service in England in 2000 some investigation was undertaken into the impact of the change, and particularly the experience of careers advisers who were subsequently working as personal advisers. Their experience was largely negative with reports of a drop in morale, a fragmentation of modes of employment (careers companies, directly by schools, local authorities and self-employment) which undermines a sense of profession. Careers advisers working outside higher education in England also now find themselves with less time to undertake continuing professional development. (Langley et al, 2014). Given the importance of Agency (Coldron and Smith 1999) and the development of professional knowledge to professional identity, a lack of engagement with professional development poses a threat to those individuals feeling a part of, and contributing to, their professional group.

A study of the experience of careers advisers who became personal advisers in the early years of Connexions highlighted the challenges that careers advisers faced when working within a neo-liberal management context which focussed on value for money and the meeting of targets alongside, and they would argue at the expense of, client need. Careers advisers faced ethical dilemmas as they struggled to balance their understanding of client needs with the targets they needed to meet. This, for example, meant placing a young person in a job, course or training opportunity which did not match their career ambitions. This is precisely the opposite of the purpose of a careers adviser's work (Colley et al, 2008). As a result of this ethical pressure, careers advisers either remained in the service feeling professionally compromised, left the service altogether or were forced to leave, because they would not prioritise targets over client need. The Connexions service also removed the focus of careers adviser expertise,

changed their job title to personal adviser and broadened routes to qualify as a careers adviser which had a negative impact on their sense of profession (Watts, 2014). Establishing the client group for personal advisers as those young people at risk of not being in education, employment or training also focussed the role on the more vulnerable which invoked the challenge of association with a lower status group.

In their study into the professionalism among careers advisers working in Connexions services, Neary and Hutchinson (2009) specifically considered the role of practitioner research and noted that careers advisers see research as valuable, but not essential, even though a trait of a profession is to have a recognised body of knowledge. The purpose of research is seen by careers advisers as striving to improve the client experience, rather than to develop the knowledge and position of the profession. This does not resonate with the concept of a distinct body of knowledge as an important part of professional identity described by Dalli (2005) and others above. Neary and Hutchinson conclude that careers advisers define their professional identity by seeing "professional service delivery as synonymous with professionalism." (2009:48). In a separate study, Neary (2014) suggests that a clear, descriptive job title and engagement with CPD contribute to the professional identity of careers practitioners working outside higher education.

In terms of the professional identity of careers advisers in higher education, studies are of even greater scarcity. A study conducted into the effectiveness of careers guidance highlighted an absence of continuing professional development for careers advisers in higher education. This conclusion was drawn on the basis that those careers advisers who participated in the study were very keen to gain feedback on their practice, with an implication that such feedback was not usually available (Bimrose, 2006). In a separate article on the role of guidance in higher education careers services, Bimrose and Dane (2007) went on to suggest that careers advisers are still heavily influenced by traditional approaches to guidance and that there is a need to develop practice in line with new thinking, research and theory. This resonates with Neary and Hutchinson's finding which

suggests that careers advisers are drawn to ‘doing’ rather than ‘thinking’, which undermines any claim to professional status as it detracts from the primacy of their body of knowledge.

Small-scale investigations into the professional identity construction of careers advisers in higher education to underpin this study have been conducted previously (Thambar, 2010, Thambar 2011, unpublished). These proved helpful in determining the research question, method and methodology being used in this study. The findings indicated that the professional identity of careers advisers was an under-researched area and that providing insights into the careers adviser perspective to their leaders and managers would contribute both to knowledge and management practice in this field.

There are studies into other non-academic professional groups within higher education which can be seen as relevant to the professional identity of careers advisers. Whitchurch (2013) used the phrase “third space professionals” to describe a growing number of roles and services, which neither conduct research nor deliver teaching. These include the Student Experience, Careers Advice, Alumni, Recruitment and Access and Outreach. These areas rely on multi-professional working in order to fulfil the purpose of their activity. In her typology of third space professionals, Whitchurch (2008) identified (1) ‘Bounded Professionals’ who work within specialist, self-imposed or institutionally imposed boundaries; (2) ‘Cross-Boundary professionals’ who work across such boundaries to build strategic advantage and institutional capability, (3) ‘Unbounded Professionals’ who focus on broadly based projects to translate their functional knowledge into institutional knowledge, negotiate relationships across boundaries and build institutional capacity and (4) ‘Blended Professionals’ who are in roles that cross professional and academic domains. Blended professionals accommodate the duality of professional and academic domains, creating an interactive knowledge environment and constructing new institutional networks. Whitchurch argues that a blended professional is most likely to achieve credibility within the academic space, having more likely worked across a number of professional settings, perhaps with higher academic

qualifications themselves (Whitchurch, 2013: 8). Whitchurch suggested a professional identity for each type expressed through the activity dimensions of spaces, knowledges, relationships and legitimacies.

These features of professional identity align with the idea, discussed in section 5 of this chapter that working in multi-professional teams has an impact on professional identity. The characteristics which relate most closely to careers advisers are summarised in the figure below. The table shows the way in which each element could be mapped onto the work of careers advisers and could provide insight into their experience of developing their professional identity within their institutions.

Table 1. Third space professionals: identified characteristics of greatest relevance to careers advisers, from Whitchurch (2013)

	Bounded Professionals	**Cross-Boundary Professionals**	**Unbounded Professionals**	**Blended Professionals**
Spaces	'Own' space differentiated from 'other space	Translate functional knowledge into institutional knowledge	Create new activity and knowledge space	Multiple understandings of the university Accommodate duality of professional and academic domains
Knowledges	Process, information-oriented Technical	Drawn from multiple organisational spaces	Construct new institutional knowledge Use knowledge, experience from outwith sector	Embed, integrate professional and academic knowledge Research into blended activity
Relationships	Based on service/support Clear distinction between academic and professional roles	Negotiated across boundaries Strong ties within prime functional area(s)	Negotiated on a personal basis Represents nodal points of networks	Alliances with key supporters of blended activity Construction of new institutional networks
Legitimacies	Provide advice, definition, control	Interpret, translate, across boundaries Construct institutional alliances	Communicative action Institutional development	Acquisition of academic credentials Ability to manage duality of 'belonging' and 'not belonging' to academic space

2.7 The Conceptual Framework and Research Question

This chapter has outlined the development of the role of careers adviser within higher education. A gentle evolution from the 1960s through to the end of the 1990s saw the role become more varied and more closely allied with the work of academics, while retaining a strong influence within the institutional careers service. The 2000s saw a further diversification of the delivery areas understood to comprise careers and employability support which in larger services in particular led to the specialisation and marginalisation of careers advisers. From 2010 to the present, the focus on employability and 'good' career destinations as a return on investment for undergraduate students from England has begun to redefine this area of work, placing it firmly in the spotlight. Careers services are either well-placed for further investment or vulnerable to a re-framing or redistribution of their work depending on the institutional view. Reflecting this, careers advisers who were historically the core professional role within a careers service are either considered an asset or are subject to questioning about the value and impact of their role.

This chapter has demonstrated that while extant work on the nature of professions and professional identity is extensive, the professional identity of careers advisers in higher education is a very much under-researched area. The areas of literature which have been reviewed suggest the following conceptual framework: (1) Members of a profession solve a publicly understood problem through the use of specialist knowledge and have traditionally protected their area of work in terms of standards and access. The protectionist approach may be to preserve standards or status;(2) An individual careers adviser will have their own professional identity which is intertwined with their personal identity; (3) It is possible to undertake a study through which a shared professional identity among careers advisers in higher education can be identified; (4) This shared professional identity will have been developed through factors which may include their experience of working as a careers adviser, working as part of a multi-professional team and of experience challenges to their professional identity.

It is hoped that a greater understanding of the professional identity of careers advisers will enable them and their leaders and managers to strengthen the ways in which careers advisers can contribute to the meeting of institutional employability expectations. This study seeks to make a contribution to this endeavour by answering the question “What is the professional identity of careers advisers in higher education in the “new” employability climate; challenges and opportunities for careers service leaders and managers” and by developing recommendations from the findings for leadership, management and professional practise.

Chapter 3 Methodology

Having established the nature of the research question and the need for an answer, consideration is now given to the methodology that is appropriate for this study. This will be followed by a chapter in which the method used in this study, is discussed. They are offered as two separate chapters for purposes of clarity.

The nature of this study is qualitative, as the purpose is to explore the experience of careers advisers in order to understand the way in which they construct their professional identity. Qualitative research enables voices to be heard which may be otherwise silent, and, by hearing people's stories in their own settings, to develop a detailed and complex understanding of a particular issue (Cresswell, 2013). It would not be appropriate to use quantitative methods for this study as a quantitative approach would be appropriately used to measure concepts that would test a hypothesis derived from a theory (Bryman and Bell, 2007). The professional identity of careers advisers in higher education is a barely-researched area where little theory exists. A qualitative approach will also enable the development of theory in this field.

A broader mixed methods study could have drawn both quantitative and qualitative approaches together by undertaking some interviews to determine key concepts, developing, piloting and distributing a questionnaire across careers advisers across the UK and then, having analysed the quantitative data, conducting some follow-up interviews to contextualise the quantitative findings. However, following the cautions set out in social investigation literature about the time and skill required to carry out such a study (Sheppard, 2004; Pole and Lampard, 2002), this did not seem practical given the time available to me as I was undertaking a part-time doctorate, and my personal research strengths and interests which tend towards qualitative methods.

The methodology for this study, an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis within a Social Constructionist approach, and the rationale for its use, are now outlined.

3.1 A Social Constructionist Approach

The studies referred to in the previous chapter indicated that social constructionism would be an appropriate approach to take for this study. The constructionist perspective is that there is no single "reality" that can be objectively determined; "reality" is the lived experience of individuals as a result of which their minds give meaning to cognitive processes and objects. Social constructionism takes the view that collective minds give meaning to shared knowledge (Blaikie, 2007). As was demonstrated in a small-scale phenomenological study into the professional identity of careers advisers (Thambar, 2010), greater meaning was given to the concept of a shared professional identity by understanding the experience of three respondents sharing a similar context. Social constructionism is often combined with interpretivism; the aim of the research is to focus on specific contexts of people's lives to understand their perspective. In this setting, the researcher also recognises his or her own background and the way in which that might shape the interpretation and positions themselves within the study to show his or her own contribution (Creswell, 2012). This is not to say that a social constructionist approach produces findings that are purely subjective; such an approach recognises that there are individual interpretations of the world and seeks to make sense of an issue by understanding shared experience through individual perspectives (Crotty, 1998).

This approach to the study of identity can be seen elsewhere. Baerstein et al (2009) used semi-structured interviews to explore the way in which medical students were developing their own professional identity. The interviews explored their individual experience as a result of which the study identified four key areas across the sample, although not every respondent had identified with each area in the same way. Wilson and Halpin (2006) explored the effect of the growth of hybrid library services within universities on the professional self-identity of academic staff through four case studies. Semi-structured interviews with each of the Learning Centre Managers and a focus group were undertaken for each case. Their findings took the form of seven themes which, again, had emerged with varying degrees of commonality across the individuals participating in the study. Crawford et al (2008)

explored the way in which community mental health nurses perceive their working lives by undertaking semi-structured interviews with 34 nurses which in each case evolved into a dialogue between the researcher and the researched. The gathered data was then analysed for common themes

It is important that the role of the researcher is made explicit within social constructionist designs as this form of research, as with all qualitative research is “quintessentially interactive” (Rossman and Rallis, 2003 p.35). The researcher (often an interviewer due to the method used) engages with respondents as “meaning makers” (Holstein and Gubrium, 2003) collaborating with them to construct the narrative of their experience (Fontana, 2003). This is demonstrated in the study by Crawford et al (2008) referred to above. Once data has been collected, “interpretation depends on the intimate, tacit knowledge of the researchers.” (Easterby-Smith et al, 2008. p.72). Rather than pretend to be objective, it is therefore important for researchers to be reflexive; clear about their own position on the issue and the assumptions that they bring to the study (Rossman and Rallis, 2003) and to be “sensitive to the subtle differences between compelling interest in a subject, advocacy and out-and-out bias.” (Ibid, p.53). Reflexivity should be an ongoing process which takes place throughout the study of a study. Rossman and Rallis go on to say, “Documenting your intellectual and methodological journey is crucial for establishing the soundness of the study.. ..Getting clear about your perspective helps establish the intellectual integrity of the project.” (Ibid, p.53).

Establishing integrity within a social constructionist study is important because of the influence that the researcher has during data collection and interpretation, and because of the primacy of the respondents’ perspective as expressed during a study. Silverman (2001) cites Mehan (1979) and Fielding (1988) in cautioning against ‘anecdotalism’ within qualitative studies, where findings are mis-represented or influenced through the selection of quotes which are more “exotic than mundane” (ibid, p.222), selection of only the data that ‘fits’ the phenomenon under investigation, and making it difficult for readers to understand how typical or representative the findings are. This can be compounded by not providing access to the raw data so that

alternative interpretations of the same data could be considered. At the point of interpretation, it has been noted with constructionist studies that “the tendency is to license speculative, exaggerated conclusions.” (Hammersley, 2008 p.137).

Yardley (2000) suggests four principles for the assessment of quality in qualitative research; sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence and, fourthly, impact and importance. There are a number of ways of addressing these principles underpinned by a transparency about all stages of the study from the sampling strategy and access to respondents through to the researcher’s feelings throughout the process. Particular strategies include purposive sampling and rigorous data collection including accurate recording of interactions and systematic data analysis. This can be achieved by the use of tabulation to count responses in qualitative data (Easterby-Smith et al, 2008, Silverman, 2001, Seale, 1999). Silverman (2001) also suggests respondent validation, where results are taken back to participants to get their feedback. This was the final stage in the study referred to above, conducted by Crawford et al (2008), where they discussed the themes they extracted from the interviews, with selected participants within the study as well as with two other groups of nurse-researchers. Only after these steps did they confirm their finding of the four themes within the professional identity of community mental health nurses.

Following these observations and experiences of previous investigations into professional identity, the phenomenological approach being used in this study is now explored here.

3.2 A Phenomenological Study

For this study the particular methodology chosen was phenomenological: a common methodology within the Social Constructionist approach (Creswell, 2012). I am very interested in the professional identity of careers advisers in higher education and am keen to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. By doing so I hope to make recommendations which will help careers advisers and their managers support and present the careers adviser role as one which contributes to the delivery of employability agendas within

universities more convincingly and consistently than has been the case in recent years. Earlier studies (Thambar, 2009, 2010, 2011) provided initial insights which suggest that a deeper investigation would increase understanding of that professional identity and, therefore, the relevance of the recommendations which could be made for leaders and managers of careers advisers in the new employability climate. These studies also demonstrated that the balance of understanding individual perspectives alongside common experience was important due to the range of routes into, and backgrounds of careers advisers in higher education and the differences in experience which might be influenced by the nature of the institution within which they work.

Another reason for choosing to undertake a phenomenological study was the way in which my experience and understanding can make a contribution to the recommendations. A study into the professional identity of careers advisers which could not fully acknowledge my own experience in this field and benefit from it where appropriate, would lack rigour and authenticity.

Phenomenology is both a philosophy and a research method. Both aspects are discussed here with respect to this study.

a. The philosophy of phenomenology

Phenomenology as a philosophical concept originates with Edmund Husserl, the idea being that in order to develop knowledge it was important to study "the things themselves" (Husserl, 1901 cited in van Manen, 1990). Husserl posited that there was intentionality to all thoughts i.e. that every thought links in some way to an object, and that all thoughts have meaning (Owen, 1996). Therefore by understanding thoughts, it is possible to develop knowledge of a human experience. For Husserl it was important that the experience is understood in a theory-free context, expressed without any influence from the researcher and before the participant(s) had an opportunity to reflect on their own thoughts or experience (Caelli, 2000). Following this epistemological approach, bracketing or 'epoche' was therefore a very important practise for the researcher, i.e. acknowledging, yet setting to one side, the researcher's own views and experience in relation

to the phenomenon under investigation. This is a positivist viewpoint, seeking accurate knowledge of the world based on objectively obtained "facts" (Crotty, 1998). Husserl's approach to studying a phenomenon was to think freely of all that a phenomenon might be and then gather data on the un-reflected experience to understand it, achieving objectivity by that data being free from interpretation by both the researcher and the researched (Dowling, 2007). Knowledge was therefore created by taking a reductionist approach, in this case reducing the phenomenon to its 'essence'.

Merleau-Ponty had a post-positivist perspective on phenomenology; he felt that 'reality' existed to be investigated and that the researcher's background would have an influence on the methods used and the findings that emerged. Therefore although objectivity might be the ideal, in reality it would be impossible (Fox, Martin and Gill, 2006). Merleau-Ponty emphasised embodied experience and 'otherness' recognising that without direct experience of a phenomenon, understanding would be through interpretation and observation which was not the same as experience itself. In the case of phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty felt that it was important to recognise and acknowledge the researcher's own experience, but to consciously distance it from the investigation.

Heidegger built on Husserl's thinking, but focussed more on the ontological, that is, the nature of reality and the study of being (Cresswell, 2013; Dowling 2007). He felt that it was through interpretation of an account of the phenomenon that we develop understanding of the phenomenon itself. For Heidegger the development of understanding was a two-way process which utilised the principles of hermeneutics during the process of analysis. The phrase "Alethic Hermeneutics" is used (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000) to distinguish this form of hermeneutics from the original phrase which refers to the theory of the interpretation of texts, particularly biblical texts (Smith et al, 2009). Heidegger conceptualised the idea of a 'hermeneutic circle' within phenomenological interpretation; in that the participants were interpreting their own experience while articulating it and the phenomenologist then interpreting that interpretation. This is far from Husserl's objective approach to developing knowledge as there are two interpretative influences on the

phenomenon under investigation. Equally, it can be argued that it is through interpretation that understanding is achieved and that, without interpretation, the knowledge developed is superficial (Todres and Wheeler, 2006).

Heidegger's approach bestows an active role upon the researcher in the development of understanding, which goes beyond 'receiving' the participants' account of their experience to interpretation during analysis. Gadamer's thinking followed Heidegger but privileged the position of the researcher further by suggesting that the researcher's own pre-understanding was helpful in understanding the phenomenon under investigation. Gadamer accepted that pre-understanding may include prejudice but believed that the process of interpretation would challenge those prejudices so that "..the hermeneutic process becomes a dialogical method whereby the horizon of the interpreter and the phenomenon being studied are combined together." (Dowling, 2007, p.134). This process is referred to as a 'double hermeneutic' (Smith 2004).

Phenomenology has evolved as a research method drawing largely upon Heidegger's interpretevist and Gadamer's constructivist perspectives on the philosophy of phenomenology. The methods used are outlined in more detail below.

b. Phenomenology as a research method

There are four broad categories of phenomenological research method:- empirical or transcendental phenomenology, hermeneutical phenomenology, 'new' or American phenomenology and interpretative phenomenological analysis (Creswell, 2012, Dowling, 2007, Smith et al. 2009). The method chosen for this study is interpretative phenomenological analysis. All four are outlined below with reference to the exploration of the professional identity of careers advisers in higher education.

i) Empirical or Transcendental Phenomenology

This method draws closely on the philosophy of Heidegger, but resonates with Husserl as the focus is on description, rather than interpretation. In a

study, the researcher's own experience and potential influence on the study are to be acknowledged and 'bracketed' so that the findings are drawn from the description of the phenomenon synthesised from participants' accounts of their experience. Moustakas (1994) outlines a clear process for such a study (Creswell, 2012):

1) Identify a phenomenon to be studied
2) Reflect upon and bracket the researcher's own experience and views on the phenomenon
3) Collect data from those who have experienced the phenomenon, making contact with participants in a way that discourages pre-reflection
4) Analyse the data by reducing it to statements and quotes from which themes emerge
5) Develop a textural description of what was experienced and a structural description of how that experience took place (for example, the situation and context)
6) Combine both the textural and structural description into a whole which describes the 'essence' of the phenomenon.

Moustakas suggests that the description should be written in the third person without individual quotes and reference to particular cases. This was the method adopted for an initial phenomenological study into the professional identity of careers advisers in higher education (Thambar, 2010). It produced valuable findings in the form of themes within a shared professional identity, but the focus on a third person description did not convey the elements of individual experience and situation which influence a respondent's professional identity creation. As this is a DBA study for which the outcomes are both a contribution to knowledge and a contribution to professional practice, the absence of an interpretative dimension would have a direct impact on the outcomes. They would limit the context for, and explanation of, the recommendations that might emerge, and limit the credibility of such recommendations amongst leaders and managers of careers advisers in higher education. For these reasons, this approach is rejected here.

ii) Hermeneutic Phenomenology

This form of phenomenology is outlined by Van Manen (1990) and is focussed on the interpretation of the accounts of the experience. Van Manen, as with Moustakas, advocates exploration of a phenomenon of personal interest to the researcher and the identification of emerging themes. However, his approach to phenomenology is not just descriptive as it also includes an interpretation of the different experiences expressed throughout the study, bringing them together in one single interpretation of the meaning of that lived experience (Cresswell, 2007). Van Manen recognises the role of the researcher in the interpretation and does not advocate bracketing, saying that "if we simply try to forget or ignore what we already "know", we might find that the pre-supposition persistently creeps back into our reflection." (van Manen, 1990, p.47). This approach was not chosen for the study as, although accommodating interpretation by the researcher it was felt that by condensing the narratives into one account, individual voices would be lost.

iii) "New" or "American Phenomenology"

This is a form of research which has emerged within the caring professions and particularly nursing research. It is drawn from a psychological approach to phenomenology which seeks a description of the experience drawn from participant accounts. The approach to phenomenology within psychology can be summarised by drawing upon the work of Giorgi (2000), Colazzi (1978) and van Kaam (1966). The following steps for analysis, which follow a gathering of accounts of individual experience illustrate the method (Dowling, 2007):

1) The descriptions of the experience are divided into units
2) The units are developed into meanings which are described as psychological or phenomenological concepts

3) The meanings are combined to form a general description of the experience

In this form of study, the questions do not seek pre-reflective experience and the aim is to create a description of a phenomenon in a cultural context rather than to identify a universal meaning (Caelli, 2000). This approach is described as 'new' or 'American' to distinguish it from the phenomenological approaches which draw more closely on Husserl's reductionist approach, although it is influenced by Heidegger's emphasis on interpretation. This form of phenomenology can be described as more subjective as the focus is on the individual experience. The researcher's reflexivity is important when developing the description of individual experiences in order to recognise and bracket their assumptions and views. Reflexivity is also important when gathering data as the participants are encouraged to reflect on their experience as part of the process. In this context, interviews are more interactive with the interviewer and interviewee producing an account which is a result of the interaction between the two (Holstein and Gubrium, 2003). Researchers need to be aware of their own position and how that might affect or influence the individual accounts which emerge (Creswell, 2012).

This approach is not being adopted for the exploration of the professional identity of careers advisers in higher education as the emphasis on description drawn from individual accounts would situate the understanding of the phenomenon firmly within the cultural context of those particular individuals (Caelli, 2000). A wider understanding of the professional identity of careers advisers will enable the development of recommendations for leaders and managers of careers advisers in a university setting beyond those from which data was gathered. This will better achieve the intended outcomes of a DBA.

iv) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

The method chosen for this study, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is an integrative approach with the following three principles outlined by Smith (2006);

1. An interest in examining the experience of each participant
2. An "intense interpretative engagement with personal verbal material obtained from each participant" (Smith et al, 2009 p.186)
3. A detailed examination of each case as part of the process.

IPA is rooted in psychology and combines the study of individual cases (idiography) with hermeneutics to derive an interpretative understanding of a phenomenon which can be objectively understood. IPA has been found to be an appropriate method for investigating a range of phenomena within the lived human experience as it takes the approach that it is possible to achieve insights into a whole phenomenon by achieving some insight into individuals (Caldwell, 2008). This is not the same as a universal understanding of a phenomenon; the result of an IPA study will be "theoretical transferability rather than empirical generalizability." (Smith et al, 2009:51). The IPA method will be applied to this study following the approach suggested by Smith et al (2009).

The idiographic approach is helpful with regard to the study of the professional identity of careers advisers within higher education as it will acknowledge the differences in experience prior to the role, the way the role is titled and configured and the impact that an institution might have on a shared professional identity. Given the range of institutions within higher education in the UK and the diversity of potential participants identified through earlier studies and the researcher's own experience of careers advisers in higher education, there is a greater prospect of theoretical transferability if individual experiences have a voice.

Within IPA, interpretation takes place through Heidegger's hermeneutic circle where there is a dynamic relationship between a 'whole' and the

‘parts of the whole’. For example, a sentence (the whole) cannot exist without the words (the part) yet the sentence derives its meaning because of the meaning of each individual word (Smith et al, 2009). The same applies to a set of interviews (the whole) and an individual account (the part). A second hermeneutic perspective within IPA is the double hermeneutic derived from Gadamer’s thinking, where the researcher interprets the participant’s own interpretation of their experience of a particular phenomenon.

The double hermeneutic of interpretation is appropriate for the area under investigation. Earlier studies (Thambar, 2009, 2010) demonstrate the value and insight brought to this issue by individual reflection on the experience of being a careers adviser. Careers advisers are encouraged to work as reflective practitioners so it is reasonable to anticipate that as participants in the study they will be reflecting upon their experience as part of their articulation. I have some experience (Thambar, 2010) of exercising and ‘managing’ my own reflexivity during data collection and while describing a phenomenon. This provides a helpful point from which to develop an interpretative approach to a phenomenological study which will result in “a coherent and legitimate account that is attentive to the words of the participants.” (Drummond et al, 2011 p.36).

There is a strong link between IPA and Narrative Analysis with both looking closely at individual accounts, examining the language for meaning, perhaps through metaphor. Some approaches to Narrative Analysis focus on making meaning by focusing on the content and structure of emerging stories (Smith et al. 2009).

IPA recognises that the active role of the researcher adds to the account of the phenomenon (Braun and Clarke, 2006), but also that the researcher will, themselves, be shaped by their investigation into the phenomenon. Reflexivity on the part of the researcher therefore forms a critical part of the process as their assumptions and views as identified at the beginning of a study may be challenged through the process of data collection and analysis:

“Thus the phenomenon, the thing itself, influences the interpretation which in turn can influence the forestructure which can then itself influence the interpretation. One can hold a number of conceptions and these are compared, contrasted and modified as part of the sense-making process.” (Smith et al, 2009, p.36).

Smith et al (2009) describe a “bandwidth of reflection” (p. 189) within IPA studies ranging from pre-reflective reflexivity (‘unconscious reflection’) through to “deliberate controlled reflection” which is the form of reflection undertaken by the researcher as part of the data analysis to derive findings from a study. Through this it is possible to see an element of reflexivity within an IPA study which reflects the double hermeneutic; the data collection is an “attentive reflection on the pre-reflective” upon which the researcher undertakes that “deliberate controlled reflection” (Smith et al, p.190). This will be a cyclical process throughout the study.

This emphasis on reflexivity for the researcher and the double hermeneutic of reflexivity resonates strongly with the depth of experience and interest that I have in this area. A rigorous process of reflection will be important to ensure that the study is enhanced by my tacit knowledge and insights (Easterby Smith et al, 2008) but that the interpretation is an accurate representation of the lived experience of the respondents whether or not that experience resonates with my own beliefs and experience.

As stated above, IPA has been found to be an appropriate method for investigating a range of phenomena within the lived human experience. For example, a study into the development of professional identity amongst family therapy trainees identified three features of that process through the use of IPA; development of a ‘therapist as a person’, a gaining of acknowledgement of their role and autonomy in their work and the evolution of their community of therapeutic practice (Fragkiadaki et al, 2013). Hattatoglu and Yakushoko (2014) used the method of IPA to explore the cultural identities of first generation Turkish immigrants in the United States working in the high technology sector. In an exploration of

the link between identity and coaching practice using IPA, Butcher (2012) found that executive coaches recognised that their clients have multiple identities including professional, social and personal identities and that identity forms a subtext to coaching practice. IPA is also used widely within nursing research as the emphasis on individual accounts places the focus of the study on the individual rather than their medical condition. This resonates with a holistic approach to nursing care (Warren, 1994).

A holistic understanding of the professional identity of careers advisers will add depth to the recommendations that emerge from this study. My experience indicates that as a professional group, careers advisers are often described collectively by their managers and leaders or by other groups of staff within careers services. The collective term is also used across higher education careers services to refer to the equivalent group in each service. This suggests that a collective identity is being bestowed on careers advisers which does not consider the experience of the individual. An IPA study has the potential to deepen the understanding of individual careers adviser experiences as well as their shared identity so that on reading the final report a reader can ".come away with the feeling that "I understand better what it is like for someone to experience that."" (Polkinghorne, 1989:46 cited in Cresswell, 2013:82).

In the next section the method as used for this study is outlined. Recognising the importance of reflexivity for an IPA study, the first section considers my biography in relation to the research process. This is followed by a description of the stages of sampling, data collection and analysis to demonstrate appropriateness to an IPA study.

Chapter 4 Method

4.1 The Researcher's Biography in relation to the research

Recognising the role of reflexivity within an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) study, this section describes my own career history and the many opportunities I have had to reflect upon and question the actual role and the perception of careers advisers in higher education. This will contextualise my own interest in this phenomenon and the potential implications for this study.

a. Career History before working within Higher Education

I trained to become a Careers Adviser in 1991 taking a Diploma in Careers Guidance at Napier University (at the time, Napier Polytechnic) in Edinburgh. My motivation to follow this career was to have a positive impact on society and to help people, particularly young people. Having ruled out teaching and social work at the time, careers advice was an obvious route to take with an equivalent qualification pathway. Upon completing the full-time one year course, I went to work for Cumbria Careers Service, part of the Local Education Authority (LEA), where my first year was a 'probationary year'. Following assessment of my work over the year by experienced colleagues and submission of a detailed report, I was awarded the Diploma in Careers Guidance (Part 2) and became a fully qualified careers adviser. I worked as a careers adviser until August 1995, moving to work for the LEA in Cheshire in 1993. From 1993-1995 the role gradually changed as the impact of the 1993 Trade Union and Employment Rights Act took effect. I found my work increasingly less satisfying as the need to produce a pre-categorised Summary of Guidance and/or an Action Plan at the end of each interview for funding purposes, drove the nature of my work in schools and the nature of the careers interview that I was able to conduct.

I left LEA careers work in 1995 to work for Newcastle-under-Lyme College at a new Sixth Form Centre that they were establishing in Stoke-on-Trent to raise aspirations and widen participation into further and higher education.

My job title changed to that of a Careers Counsellor and I was responsible for liaison with six partner schools to recruit students to the Centre and for careers education and guidance for students at the Centre. After a year, my job title changed to Careers and Schools Liaison Co-ordinator, which I felt more accurately represented my role. I enjoyed being part of an institution and having a professional identity that was affiliated to a single institution, rather than a broader educational service. I particularly valued the opportunity to have a longer term relationship with the students who studied at the Centre and felt that I was able to offer them more meaningful support with their career plans and ideas. In this role, I was also a client of Staffordshire LEA Careers Service and regularly hosted one of their careers advisers who delivered guidance and group work to some of my students. It was interesting to work with someone in the role that I had left and it confirmed that leaving LEA careers work had been the right decision. As my work involved so many group and classroom based sessions, I undertook a City and Guilds certificate in Further and Adult Education Teaching to develop and consolidate my skills.

b. Working as a Careers Adviser within Higher Education

By 1998, the Sixth Form Centre had been established and progression to a University seemed to be the next logical career move. To my delight, I was offered a job at the University of Leeds in June of that year. Confirming my perception that such roles were highly sought-after, I was one of eight from 88 applicants who were shortlisted for the 18 month contract. The University of Leeds offered the challenge and satisfaction of working with high-achieving students who had many career options and were targeted by top graduate recruiters. The Careers Centre at Leeds also had a reputation for sector-leading work, having recently introduced academically accredited career development modules into the curriculum, and I was very interested in gaining experience in this area.

I thoroughly enjoyed working as a careers adviser at Leeds. I appreciated the association with such a highly regarded institution and enjoyed

developing networks and working with the students. I taught on academically accredited career development modules and introduced a compulsory first year career and academic development module to the Business School in 2002. In this year, I also co-ordinated the Careers Centre teaching portfolio, as a result of which I became the External Examiner for Career Development Modules at the University of Bradford from 2002 -2006.

c. Making the Transition from Careers Adviser to Manager

In 2003, I made a successful application to be seconded to a project management role at Yorkshire Universities, the regional higher education association in the Yorkshire region. I was ready for a new challenge and could not see any obvious opportunities within my existing role at Leeds. From 2003 – 2006, I established and developed a Regional Development Agency-funded graduate retention project. “GraduatesYorkshire” was delivered through activity at the ten university careers services across the region which increased the number of student and graduate job opportunities in Yorkshire and the Humber. The content of the role was very different to that of a careers adviser: negotiating budgets and targets, supporting the development of activities in a way that met both the university and Regional Development Agency priorities, providing financial and activity reports and bidding for additional and continuation funding, which was successfully secured.

In this role, I worked closely with the heads of careers service within the Yorkshire region, which gave me an insight into their roles and a greater appreciation of institutional issues and challenges beyond internal careers service operation. I also worked with external economic development agencies, often explaining why careers services were best-placed to deliver the student and graduate-facing elements of the project and to lead employer engagement in this area. In doing so, I was struck by a lack of understanding and appreciation of careers service activity and expertise in many cases. During this time I also undertook a part-time MA at Leeds University Business School with a project management emphasis which included MBA modules in Business Excellence and Change Management.

I feel that my GraduatesYorkshire experience marks a ‘step change’ in the way that my career has subsequently progressed. The skills, insights and additional qualification meant that I was far better equipped to consider careers service leadership roles than if I had worked for a further three years as a careers adviser.

d. Introduction to Careers Service Leadership and Management

In 2006, I returned to the Careers Centre at the University of Leeds having successfully competed for the role of Assistant Director (Business Engagement). In contrast with my application for the role of careers adviser, I was one of ten applicants and on a shortlist of three.

I was able to apply the combination of my experience as a careers adviser and at GraduatesYorkshire to good effect, but continued to learn as I worked closely with the Centre’s Employer Team, took responsibility for the University’s Business Start-Up service and then extended my portfolio to include Work Placement activity and Careers Centre IT and Marketing. Although my role was not focussed on the work of careers advisers, I managed those careers advisers whose work was most relevant to my portfolio. In this role, I often represented the Careers Centre within the wider University and, as in my GraduatesYorkshire role, was keen to promote the expertise and activity of the Centre and particularly our careers advisers. However, on many occasions, I was struck by the contrast between the way in which I was promoting my colleagues and their own self-presentation and confidence.

In 2009, I started my DBA at Bradford School of Management. Prompted by the experiences outlined above, I chose to investigate the way in which careers advisers construct their professional identity. The findings from studies throughout the taught part of the course confirmed my interest in this issue, as did my ongoing experiences at Leeds. The announcement of the findings of the Browne Review in 2010, the anticipation of the raising of undergraduate tuition fees for students from England to £9,000 a year from 2012/13 and a resultant focus on employability and graduate employment was a challenge that I was keen to meet. However, I was struck that a

number of my careers adviser colleagues, rather than welcome the potential focus on our work, were uninterested or hesitant.

From 2010 – 2013, I worked with my teams to develop our services to students and employers within my areas of responsibility. In 2011, the University of Leeds won the AGCAS Excellence Award for Marketing for our work to engage unengaged students. In developing new materials to engage our students, I was keen to describe our services as 'expert'. In 2011/12, I led the introduction of the Centre's social media presence, a complete re-development of our website and the implementation of a sector –leading 'careers registration' system which would enable us to target our services to the least career-focussed students. These latter developments won the University of Leeds the 2013 AGCAS Excellence Award for Student Engagement and the overall Winner of Winners Award.

During this time, I continued my DBA studies, completing the taught part of the programme and proceeding through the Mini-Viva to data collection for this study. Much of 2012 was spent balancing the major developments outlined above alongside data collection and analysis.

e. Careers Service Leadership, a new challenge.

In January 2013, I was invited to apply for the post of Director of Careers and Employability at the University of Nottingham. Although I had not been seeking a change, particularly before completing the DBA, the opportunity at Nottingham was unique as it involved leading a service which had recently expanded in response to the employability agenda. The service grew from 36 to 67 staff, through a combination of additional investment and incorporation of existing staff within the institution. One of the interesting elements of this expansion, which pre-dated my arrival by four months, was that it had assumed that an increase in the number of careers advisers would not deliver the impact that the University needed. Therefore, while 22 new posts were created, none of them were careers adviser roles. There was one key role – faculty careers consultant - where a careers guidance qualification was deemed desirable, not essential, yet four out the five appointments to that role were experienced careers advisers from other

universities; against the expectations of those leading the recruitment, they were the best candidates for the roles.

I suspended my DBA studies for a year in June 2013, while I relocated and established myself in the new role, which is challenging, but enjoyable, providing an opportunity to build on my previous experience and make a difference on a scale which would not be available elsewhere in the UK. It is interesting and very relevant to my research to be leading a service where careers advisers were once conceptualised as a problem, not the solution, to the employability challenge. I am drawing my own conclusions about this as I get to know and understand the institution and the individuals concerned.

f. Implications for this study

As my biography indicates, I have a long-standing interest in the professional identity of careers advisers. However, the extent of my connections and profile across higher education careers services had the potential to undermine the study through my own actions, for example the identification of the sample and a bias to my experience within the interview questions. It was therefore critical that I was "sensitive to the subtle differences between compelling interest in a subject, advocacy and out-and-out bias" (Rossman and Rallis, 2003 p.54), in order to conduct a study of integrity and credibility. There was also the risk that participants would respond to their knowledge of me or the University of Leeds (my employing organisation at the point of data collection) within their answers, rather than focus on their own thoughts and experience. For that reason, I decided to visit all the institutions and respondents, rather than inviting them to meet with me in Leeds which may have been convenient or of interest to some of them. I hoped that this would mean that despite any knowledge that they may have of Leeds, their responses would not be shaped by a comparison or contrast between their premises and location and the one enjoyed by the Careers Centre at Leeds. After a small number of visits, it became apparent that this was the right decision to have made.

There were also potential benefits to the study as a result of my career history, most practically in terms of access to respondents to conduct the

study based on my network and profile. My personal insight into the role of a careers adviser and my understanding of careers services in higher education had the potential to add valuable insight during the interviews and to enable the seeking of clarification where I could see a number of possible interpretations to responses. The quality of the interaction during the research interviews could also be enhanced through my experience of conducting impartial guidance interviews, as I am experienced in conducting non-directive interactions, where the focus is on the respondent, rather than on me. I entered into the interview process with the intention of conducting interactive interviews, during which I would engage with the respondents in order to co-construct a narrative of their experience, based on the meaning that they gave to it (Holstein and Gubrium, 2003, Fontana, 2003).

My current role may also facilitate the dissemination of the findings and recommendations that result from this work. Sharing thoughts on the leadership and management of careers advisers as a Director of a large higher education careers service may seem more credible to Heads of Service than if they were being shared by an Assistant Director.

The remainder of this chapter details the steps taken to collect and analyse the data and addresses the opportunities and risks presented by my biography to enhance or undermine the study.

4.2 Sampling Rationale

Given the varied nature of institutions within the university sector and my network and my experience of working with a range of careers services, a stratified sample was selected. This was intended to avoid bias through the targeting of particular institutions based on geography or institutional type and offered the potential to illustrate sub-groups within the respondents. A stratified sample also increases the possibility that findings from this study could form the basis of relevant recommendations to a wider range of heads of service as different types of institution would be covered by the study. It was also a criterion sampling, the criteria being that all respondents had direct experience of the phenomenon of working as a careers adviser in a UK higher education institution which receives public funding and features in

university league tables. It is fundamental for an IPA study that all respondents have direct experience of the phenomenon under investigation and ensuring that the sample meets these criteria contributes to quality assurance within the research. However, in terms of identifying the respondents, there was an element of convenience and opportunism to the sampling as availability to participate in interviews may have influenced which careers adviser or advisers within each service were interviewed.

a. Sampling Strategy

The strategy for developing the sample of institutions was to look at the First Destinations Data for the Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE) in the two most recent years before collecting data for this study. The destinations data indicates the proportion of a graduating cohort who are in a graduate level job, graduate level study, a non-graduate job, unemployed or unavailable for work (which encompasses taking time out and travelling as well as other personal situations). These are nationally standardised data collected by every university in the UK for the Higher Education Statistics Agency and are, therefore, the most reliable data against which to identify a stratified sample. The introduction in September 2012 , of increased tuition fees and of a compulsory Key Information Set to provide prospective students with detailed information on the content, structure and employment outcomes of the course they are considering has led most institutions to look more closely at their DLHE data. As the only available measurable data, it is very influential in determining institutional approaches to employability activity and their careers services.

It is relevant to use DLHE data to identify a stratified sample of university careers services for this study as this is the only externally verifiable measure associated with careers service work within their institution, however there are limitations. It can be and is argued that a six month ‘snapshot’ , particularly in the economic climate that has prevailed from 2008 onwards, does not accurately reflect the career destination of a leaver of higher education; many graduates may take temporary ‘non-graduate’ work while they secure an opportunity more directly related to their level and subject of

study (Nijar, 2009). For this reason, the sample for this study did not focus exclusively on the DLHE information but also considers overall league table position (taking into account entry requirements, student satisfaction, DLHE data and Research Assessment).

b. Sample Identification

Fifteen institutions were identified for the sample with the expectation that this would equate to a minimum of fifteen in-depth interviews with careers advisers as at least one careers adviser in each institution would agree to participate in the study. Proponents of IPA studies recommend engaging with a small number of participants given the detailed exploration of each account. In order to develop an understanding and recommendations which could be relevant to leaders and managers of careers advisers across UK higher education institutions, a broader sample was selected. This is well within the band of five to twenty five participants recommended for a phenomenological study (Polkinghorne, 1989).

The element of the sample that reflected the most recent leavers' data was identified by referring to the most recently published Complete University Guide league table. Due to the timescale of publication of statistics and the compilation and dating of league tables, the DLHE destination that features in that league table would have been the data relating to those students who graduated two years before the table was published. By way of example, the Complete University Guide league table published in 2006, as with all tables in that year, was dated '2007' to reflect the fact that it was designed to inform applicants for 2007 entry. The destinations data in that table was the most recent available at the point of compilation, i.e. the destinations data for 2005 graduates, which was verified and released in May 2006. The dates mentioned here are for illustration purposes only; the data used to inform the sample for the study are from more recent tables. The precise dates have not been used to preserve the anonymity of participating institutions.

The first five institutions for the sample were identified using the overall league tables which derived a ranking for each institution based on their average entry standards, student satisfaction score, research assessment

score and graduate prospects score (the percentage of respondents in the DLHE data who were in a graduate level job or postgraduate study on the census date). The league table is made up of 116 institutions and the institutions at the top, the median, the bottom of the table, at and at the mid-points between the median and the top and bottom respectively were identified as follows:

Table 2: Sample derived from League Table Position

Overall Position in Most Recent League Table Available	**University**
1	A
29	B
58 (Median)	C
87	D
116	E

The next five institutions were identified using the ranking from the same league table which placed institutions in order based on their graduates prospects score (effectively the 2009 DLHE data). Again, the league table was made up of 116 and the institutions at the top, the median, the bottom of the table, at and at the mid-points between the median and the top and bottom respectively were identified. However, the university in first place on this basis was a private institution with charitable status which does not receive any funding from the Higher Education Council for England. It was therefore decided to exclude them from the sample and take the institution in second place rather than at the top of this table. The five institutions identified for the sample on this basis are as follows:

Table 3: Sample derived from Graduate Prospects Score

Position in Most Recent League Table based on Graduate Prospects	University
2	F
29	B
58 (Median)	G
87	H
116	I

For the final five institutions in the sample, reference was made to the 2010 DLHE information available from HESA, but at that point yet to appear in any league tables. In order to identify universities where the institutional response to employability might be influenced by this data, institutions were ranked based on their DLHE Employment Indicator score (the number of graduates who are working or studying as a percentage of the total number who are working, studying or seeking work) in relation to their benchmark. The benchmark is the score that HESA sets as a target Employment Indicator for each institution in order to facilitate comparisons between institutions. The benchmarks are calculated taking into account the entry requirements, subjects of study, and the ethnicity and gender profile of the leaving cohort.

The 120 universities in the HESA table were ranked based on their Employment Indicator-Benchmark score. This placed the institutions which had most exceeded their benchmark at the top of the table and those who had the lowest Employment Indicators in relation to their Benchmarks towards the bottom. The institutions at the top, the median, the bottom of the table, at and at the mid-points between the median and the top and bottom

respectively, were identified. As with the five institutions selected above, exempting a private institution, the five institutions identified for this sample are as follows:

Table 4: Sample derived using the HESA Benchmark

Most Recently available DLHE Data Indicator minus HESA Benchmark	**University**
2	J
30	K
60 (Median)	L
90	M
120	N

Having identified the sample through a stratified approach, it was interesting to note that the approach taken effectively creates a 'maximum variation' sample which is appropriate for a qualitative study. Having identified such a varied range of institutions at the beginning of the study maximises the potential to identify differences or represent a range of perspectives which can be considered "an ideal in qualitative research" (Cresswell,207:126). The range of differences can be seen in the table below in terms of two descriptors of each institution; the type of institution and interest group membership. The locations of the institutions ranged from northern and central Scotland, central and southern Wales, the north of England, the midlands and London and the south east. Some of the institutions have a strong identity through the interest group to which they belong so that membership is also indicated. The interest groups referred to in the table are as follows:

Table 5: Interest Groups

NB. The example institutions did not participate in the study

Russell Group	Represents 24 research-intensive institutions including Southampton, Birmingham and Edinburgh
94 Group	Represented 15 research-focussed institutions including Bath, Leicester and Sussex. It disbanded in November 2013.
University Alliance	Represents 23 business-focussed institutions including The Open University, Nottingham Trent and Portsmouth
Million Plus:	A Think Tank representing 26 new universities including Derby, Middlesex and Edinburgh Napier

Table 6: Summary of Institutional Sample

University	Institutional Type	Interest Group
A	Traditional (research intensive) University	Russell Group
B	Traditional (research intensive) University	Russell Group
C	Former Polytechnic with traditionally vocational focus	University Alliance
D	Former College of Higher Education	
E	Former Polytechnic with traditionally vocational focus	
F	Traditional (research intensive) University	Russell Group
G	Traditional (research intensive) University	94 Group
H	Former Polytechnic with traditionally vocational focus	Million Plus
I	Former Institute of Higher Education	Million Plus
J	Former Polytechnic with traditionally vocational focus, recently rebranded	Million Plus
K	Traditional (research intensive) University	
L	Former Advanced College of Technology with strong research and teaching industrial links	
M	Former College of Higher Education	University Alliance
N	Traditional (research intensive) University	

4.3 Engaging Respondents

a. Gaining access

I understood that heads of careers service would wish to be involved in the request for careers advisers within their service to participate in the study. The next stage in the process was, therefore, to gain their permission for institutional participation, based on the sample which had been identified. The heads of service were easily identifiable through my existing network (six were known to me personally) and web searches. An initial approach was made via email (Appendix 3), which introduced me professionally and as a doctoral student, outlined the research and requested that I visit their institution to meet a willing respondent (or respondents) for a private and confidential, recorded discussion. Reassurances were given that the identity of the institution and the respondent(s) in relation to particular views or comments would remain anonymous. The head of service was given the option to decline to participate and the reassurance that if they did give consent, then I would liaise directly with potential respondents and not add to their workload. In all cases, the responses were positive, although as expected, some responses required slightly more 'chasing' than others. This suggests that my own network and profile within the area of work had a positive impact on access for the purposes of this study.

b. Identifying Respondents

As a result of the initial contact, some Heads of Service had spoken to colleagues directly and so responded to me with the email details of those who would be interested. Others responded to express support in which case I sent them an email to pass on to their careers advisers (see Appendix 4). All those careers advisers whose email addresses were passed back to me from a Head of Service and those who responded directly to the email sent by me via the Head of Service were interviewed. This approach was taken to avoid bias from me in the selection of respondents.

22 respondents across the 14 institutions came forward. Three people from the largest institution in the sample, University B (which had appeared twice in the stratified institutional sample) were interested in participating; this was the largest number of respondents from a single institution. A further five institutions had two respondents.

Ten of the respondents, representing six of the institutions within the sample had a professional link to me either through attendance at the same training course or conference or, in one case, having held positions on the same AGCAS working group. Given the nature of an IPA study, this did not of itself present a problem; the interviews were planned to be interactive as I played a part in the collaborative process of meaning making, rather than bracketing my experience. For such interactive interviews some writers recommend that researchers identify participants with whom they have a connection (Ellis and Berger, 2003). None of the respondents were my close professional associates or are my friends in a purely social context.

Appendix 5 outlines the profile of the 21 careers advisers whose responses form the basis of this study (see 'Data Collection' section (c) regarding the respondent who it was not appropriate to include). Although the individuals within the sample were self-selecting, the diversity of the respondents in the context of my knowledge of careers advisers in higher education, is an appropriate representation of the profession as a whole. The profile of the sample is summarised here where the categories of respondent are not mutually exclusive.

Table 7: Summary of individuals within the sample

Category of Respondent	Number	Percentage of Sample
Gender		
Female	14	66%
Male	7	33%
Contract		
Part-Time	5	24%
Full-Time	16	76%
Qualification		
Diploma in Careers Guidance (AGCAS or DipCG)	16	76.5%
Working towards Diploma	2	9.5%
None and not working towards one	3	14%

c. Briefing the Respondents

I corresponded with the respondents to arrange a convenient date and time for the interview and to answer any questions they might have. Closer to the scheduled meeting, an email was sent re-confirming the arrangements including a reminder of the intention to record the interview (see Appendix 6). I also re-confirmed that it was not necessary for respondents to do anything in preparation for the interview. This was important as, following an IPA method, the purpose of the interview was to hear the pre-reflective experience or the description of and reflection on the respondents' lived experience as it came to mind during the interview. Attached to that

message was a copy of the consent form for respondents to consider (Appendix 7) with the reassurance that the consent form was to protect their interests. I made it clear that I was happy to go through the form with them in person before they signed it. I also ensured that each participant had a mobile contact number in case of any last-minute changes that might occur for either of us.

4.4 Data Collection

a. Timing

The data collection took place in a four month period between April and July 2012. Visits were arranged to meet the availability of the participants, to fit around my professional commitments and to take advantage of a visit to Scotland to undertake some consultancy work and to the Association of Graduate Recruiters conference in Wales.

The meetings were scheduled to allow up to an hour, but varied depending on the approach of the respondent. The shortest interview was 22 minutes and the longest 82 minutes reflecting the range of ways in which the participants responded to the questions.

b. Setting-up the discussion

On arrival, I was greeted by the respondent and shown either to their office or to a booked interview room. In keeping with the way in which a careers adviser would greet a client, both parties were keen to establish a rapport and this was easily done either by discussing the study or the contact that the respondent has, or had with my own institution or with me through AGCAS training courses, working groups or conferences. In some cases, I was given a tour around the careers service public areas first which was interesting and helped me to gauge the scope of the careers service and to establish a rapport. Once in the room, we agreed the most appropriate seating positions bearing in mind the need to take an audio recording of the discussion. All the respondents conduct one-to-one guidance interviews as part of their role so

although this was a different type of interview, these introductory moments were comparatively straightforward.

Once we were comfortable, I re-stated the purpose of the discussion and the importance of the consent form and gave the respondents the opportunity to ask any questions about it. In most cases the respondents had already printed out and signed the consent form. Two respondents were keen to clarify their anonymity and that of their institution in relation to particular comments and were then quite happy to sign.

Before the interview commenced, the voice recorder was tested to ensure that the respondent could be heard clearly and that the device was operating correctly. I asked an off-topic question to help break the ice; often something about their journey to work. After approximately 30 seconds the recording stopped and I played it back for us both to hear. We were then able to agree on recording quality and position of the device for the interview. This process also helped the respondent to feel that they were active participants in the recording element of the interview rather than that it was being done to them; they had made a contribution to this dimension of the interaction and heard the sound of their voice that I would be listening to as part of the data analysis process.

c. Exceptions

There were two respondents whose interviews were not set up as described above.

One respondent, who had replied to all previous correspondence confirming that they were happy with the arrangements, including the recording, declared once settled in the room, that they did not want to be recorded after all. This was frustrating, but fortunately there were two respondents from that institution and the other respondent was happy to be recorded as had been agreed. This interview, therefore, proceeded while I made some written notes. This respondent also worked part-time across two institutions and largely spoke about their experiences at the other institution. Although the respondent gave some very useful and interesting insights based on their

overall experience, the lack of a transcribed voice recording and their emphasis on another institution which was not part of the sample means that the data from their interview has not been used in this study in the interests of consistency and rigour.

Another respondent was contacted just as they were about to take early retirement from their role and I was not able to travel to meet them before they finished. That respondent was the only (remaining) careers adviser at that institution following an institutional restructuring of the careers service. The respondent was, however, happy to be interviewed from their home via Skype. I tested the quality of a Skype recording with a family member and then agreed a date and time with the respondent who emailed a scan of the signed consent form to me. The interview proceeded as described in this section; the lack of face-to-face meeting and the potential challenges of establishing a rapport were offset by the fact that the respondent and I have met regularly at conferences and other training events over the years so had an established connection. As part of the set-up the recording device was tested; this enabled me to position the device at an appropriate distance from the computer speakers so that the sound was not distorted. That, and the quality of the transcription, has enabled this interview to be used in this study.

d. The Interviews

i) Pilot

These interviews were not the first interviews that I had undertaken as part of my research into this area. As part of the Qualitative Methods module within the taught part of the DBA programme (July 2010), I undertook three recorded interviews with careers advisers. However, the questions being used for this study differed slightly so I was keen to pilot the exact questions before moving out into the field. I therefore carried out a pilot interview with an interested colleague at my own institution. Following the interview, we discussed the way I had approached it and how the colleague felt about the questions that had been asked. Based on their feedback, some minor

alterations were made resulting in the wording of the questions for the interviews outlined below.

ii) Format and approach

The approach adopted for these interviews was that of an interactive interview where the researcher aimed to “incite respondent’s answers, virtually activating narrative production” by engaging with the respondent to “provoke responses”.

For each interview in this study, I switched on the recording device and started by thanking the respondents for taking the time to meet with them. I summarised the area of research, the data collection and explained to the respondent that they were one of a number across 14 higher education Institutions in the UK. It was explained to the respondents that they would be asked three open questions, that there were no ‘right answers’ and that the researcher was interested in their experiences of working as a careers adviser in higher education focussing upon, but not exclusively, discussing their current role.

The three questions that I asked were:

1. What is your experience of feeling like a professional as a careers adviser in higher education?
2. What is your experience of being recognised as a professional as a careers adviser in higher education?
3. What do you feel the impact of the “new” employability environment is, or might be, on your experience of feeling, or being recognised, as a professional as a careers adviser in higher education?

I asked each question and then allowed the respondent to speak, offering clarification where a respondent requested it, seeking clarification if required and sometimes reflecting comments back to the respondent to encourage them to expand or to help keep the conversation flowing. Following the discussion around the three questions, I gave the respondents the opportunity to add any further comments or share any other thoughts that had come to mind during the discussion, related to the area of their

professional identity. This was an important part of the interview as some respondents shared some of their most interesting thinking in that part of the interview, rather than through answering the questions. Once the respondent felt that they had said everything that they wanted to, I switched off the recording device and thanked them for their participation.

As a small token of appreciation for their time and contribution to the study, I gave each respondent a small confectionary gift before leaving. This was always after the interview had been concluded and with no prior indication that it would be forthcoming. This approach was taken so that the small gift did not influence the participants either to participate or to respond in a particular way during the interview.

iii) Challenges

The respondents participated in the interviews in different ways, all providing valuable insights. There was some challenge when first meeting some participants because, as careers advisers used to being the interviewee and also in the role of host, they instinctively tried to make me feel comfortable and set the scene for the interview! In two cases, I had to work hard to establish their role as interviewee in a way that did not undermine a sense of dialogue and collaboration. This was successfully achieved and these experiences were a helpful reminder to me of the interview experience of the participants and how important it was to steer the conversation to ensure that the focus was on the participant and not on my own experience.

In addition to the 'exception' identified in 4.4(c), who did not wish to be recorded, there was one other challenging interview. This was not in relation to the respondent but due to the fact that they were very softly spoken and did not have access to a private meeting room in which to conduct the interview. The respondent felt that as it was a Friday afternoon during the vacation the shared space would be quiet, and in response to my gentle questioning, it was clear that they could not think of an alternative. The interview therefore went ahead, but while none of the respondents' colleagues were in the immediate vicinity which preserved the confidentiality of the discussion, I was very aware of the background conversations which

could have affected the quality of the audio recording. Fortunately, this interview took place later on in the data collection period so I was experienced in conducting these interactions and did not get distracted by these concerns. The quality of the recording was sufficient for transcription.

iv) The role of the researcher

In the early stages of data collection, I was aware of meeting some challenges in my own interview approach which aimed to conduct interactive interviews without influencing the responses. At one point in each of the first two interviews I unintentionally made a comment that could have influenced the next response. This was because I was speaking about an area that I have been immersed in professionally for many years. I had also been considering the issue of professional identity of careers advisers in depth in preparation for this study. . Following those two incidents, which were taken into consideration when conducting the analysis, I took care not to influence subsequent discussions and did not share my thoughts on the issues being discussed or share with respondents the findings from earlier studies in this area. This meant that my style evolved into reflexive dyadic rather than interactive interviewing; I shared my experiences to reciprocate the disclosures being made by the participant rather than discuss the phenomenon of professional identity collaboratively in order to understand the participant's experience (Ellis and Berger, 2003). This effectively removed an interactive approach to co-creation of the narrative, common in interviews for qualitative studies, but I felt more confident that the reflexive dyadic approach would not steer the interview towards my own perspectives and experience, but allow the respondents' voices to be heard.

As outlined as part of my biography, at the time of data collection I was working at a careers service considered to be sector-leading and known by reputation, if not through direct contact, to all the respondents. So that this connection did not influence the discussion either, I provided minimal responses to questions about my institution's practice during the interview, playing down the sector-leading and large-scale elements of service activity

and reciprocating by sharing my own experience only where there were similar service-wide challenges.

After each interview had ended, any particular discussion points on which I had 'held back' in order to avoid steering the dialogue away from the participant's own experience, were picked up. At this point I did share more information about relevant experiences, even if they were not directly comparable in scale or breadth to that of the respondent. This was to reinforce a sense of collaboration between the participant and I and also done in the spirit of the active network of careers advisers and careers services in higher education as members of AGCAS.

Shortly after each interview, I wrote in a reflective journal to capture my thoughts about the interaction. An important part of my personal learning as a result of those early interviews, and the reflection that followed, was that I have experience and understanding of being a careers adviser but, having spent nine years in related but different roles, I no longer occupy the same professional space as those working as careers advisers in higher education. My own experience is therefore related to the issue but did not offer a parallel perspective on the professional identity of careers advisers to those who were being interviewed. Keeping a reflective journal played an important part during the data collection as it supported a reflexive dyadic approach to interviewing but still enabled me to express and capture the thoughts and ideas that had come to me, while listening to the experience and perspective of the respondents in relation to their professional identity.

The journal went on to be an important point of reference during the data analysis as referral to my notes and comments helped me to ensure that my analysis was focussed upon interpreting the meaning that the respondents made of their experience, rather than my interpretation of their experiences in relation to my own perspective.

v. Follow-up

As well as writing in my reflective journal, I also followed-up each interview with a short email, thanking the respondent for taking part and clarifying the next steps in terms of planned timescales for data analysis, writing-up and submission of the thesis. Although it was not made explicit in the email, I felt that this was also a helpful way of reminding the respondents that they could contact the researcher so that if they wished to change their mind about participation in the study, it would be easier to get in touch.

vi. Subsequent Correspondence with respondents

At the point that I moved institutions, I contacted all the respondents to explain that I had suspended my studies and therefore would not be completing this work to my original schedule. Nearly a year after the interviews, this was a further opportunity to maintain contact with respondents and keep them informed as had been promised. In May 2015 as this thesis was being prepared for submission, the respondents were contacted to ask them for an alternative preferred name to attribute to their quotations. 17 out of the 21 respondents got back in touch, two indicating that they were happy to have a name allocated. This left six names to be allocated, 3 male and 3 female to reflect the gender balance of the respondents within the sample. I selected six names of my own family and friends to represent those respondents who had not got in touch.

e. Data Storage

The voice recordings were transferred to my own computer and also to a separate portable hard drive. They were emailed to Casting Words from my

email address which also meant that they were saved to my personal files on the network at my own institution. Saving the recordings in three separate secure locations would help to ensure that I would have access to them throughout the remainder of this study. When I changed institutions in 2013, I moved the interviews within my personal files to the new institutional network so that access and security were maintained.

4.5 Data Analysis

a. Transcription

The interview audio-files were transcribed using the service 'Casting Words'. In all cases time-stamps were applied. In the cases of the interview conducted by Skype and the interview that took place in a shared space, the 'Difficult Audio' option was selected to maximise the clarity of the transcript. Casting Words emailed the transcripts to me in a Word format.

The service from Casting Words meant that I started the process of analysis with a working document for each interview. In each case I listened to the recording with a print-out of the transcript, amending it as I went along to ensure accuracy and correct any omissions. Some transcripts required minimal amendments, often related to the use of acronyms such as AGCAS and DLHE (the Destinations of Leavers of Higher Education). Occasionally, there were strong regional accents which affected the accuracy of the transcription, but not to a damaging degree. There was only one where there were so many inaccuracies that I had to request a re-transcription; in this case there were also four minutes of dialogue missing so Casting Words did not charge to repeat the work.

b. Approach to Analysis in line with IPA

The approach to analysis in an IPA study, as with any qualitative study is iterative and inductive. The aim is to engage reflectively with the accounts of experience provided by the participants, re-visiting the accounts in order to test the interpretation and add depth to the concepts as they emerge.

Smith et al (2009 p.80), suggest a framework for interpretative phenomenological analysis which would include the following steps:

- Reading and re-reading the participant accounts; actively engaging with the data to focus on the individual experience

- Initial Noting; continue close analysis of the accounts seeking descriptive, linguistic and conceptual comments through which the core comments relating to the phenomenon can appear. Paying attention to the language at this stage can help to identify abstract concepts within each account which may help to make sense of the meaning.

- Developing Emergent Themes; analyse the notes taken so far to confirm emergent themes within the account which reflect the participant's words and their interpretation of their experience

- Seeking Connections across emergent themes. A number of devices are suggested in order to achieve this for example contextualisation –looking at references to time and place when particular themes are raised – and numeration; considering the number of times a reference is made to a particular theme (Smith et al, 2009 p. 98).

This process would then be repeated across each case in a study, before looking across the cases to identify super-ordinate themes. These are overarching themes which encapsulate the common interpretations of experience shared by the participants. The extent of the analytical process for each case will be influenced by the number of cases being considered within the study.

The IPA method is not prescriptive and autonomous approaches to analysis are recommended accepting that in the same way that each participant has a different experience, each IPA study has particular features. It is the researcher's prerogative to develop an approach which attends to the

requirements of rigour and validity within the study, captures the integrity of participant accounts and develops an interpreted understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

For this study, the framework outlined above was adapted to reflect the number of cases under investigation and evolved as the researcher engaged with the data. This adaptation and evolution is outlined below.

i. Understanding each case and emerging themes

The initial phase of analysis began as an exercise to ensure that accurate transcriptions would be used from the first point of engagement with the data. I listened to each transcription carefully to check the Casting Words version and annotated it where necessary. This often required re-listening to particular words and phrases to make the corrections. It is estimated that this stage of listening to each interview took on average half the time again of the length of the original interview.

Once I had completed a transcript, I amended the Word document using 'track changes' as 'version 2' so that the original Casting Words version could be captured alongside the amendments in electronic form (see Appendix 8). I then saved the transcript as 'version 3' with track changes accepted so that I had an accurate account of the interview in the traditional transcript format.

It became apparent during this process that this initial stage of listening could form the first stage of the analysis; as well as making corrections to the original transcript I also found myself highlighting comments of particular interest or noting observations and questions. I also noticed that I was starting to identify common themes between interviews.

In order to capture this thinking, after each interview I drew out a one page representation of the discussion, highlighting key observations and quotations from the respondents and making notes in pencil where they felt it either linked to findings from a different interview or raised key questions. An example of this work in progress can be seen in Appendix 9.

ii. Proposing super-ordinate themes

At the end of this process, I had an updated version of each interview transcript alongside a one-page representation. Given that I was working with 21 transcripts I decided to use the one-page representations as a basis from which initially to identify super-ordinate themes. I captured these in a Summary Document which stated the theme, key examples of the responses which led to the identification of the theme and some examples of direct quotations which illustrated the responses. In this document, I also captured the themes that emerged in discussion about the impact of the 'new' employability environment on the roles of the respondents. The Summary Document can be seen in Appendix 10. These 'draft' themes were then tested and refined in the next stage of the analysis.

iii. Confirming super-ordinate themes and identifying divergence

For the third stage of the analysis, I followed the format recommended by Smith et al (2009) in order to confirm the super-ordinate themes, note any further observations and to capture additional quotations to illustrate the findings. It is described here through the steps that I took: 'Version 3' of each transcript was then re-formatted as 'version 4' so that it appeared in the document as the middle of a three-column table. I then listened to each interview again, annotating version 4, noting relevant super-ordinate themes to the left of the original transcript and, on the right, identifying and adding researcher observations to the phrases and comments which supported those themes. There was also space to note comments and quotes which did not fall easily within a super-ordinate theme or which contradicted those themes. In this way, divergence as well as convergence of participant accounts was captured for inclusion in the account of the phenomenon. An example of this can be seen in Appendix 11. After each interview, I also updated the one-page representation and, where appropriate the Summary Document. The updated Summary Document can be seen in Appendix 12 with the newer comments in purple; there are some additions and changes

but many of the themes and observations remained relevant after a second round of analysis.

iv. Developing recommendations

Outline recommendations were developed by further reflection on the super-ordinate themes, focussing on the key findings and 'subtleties' which were also articulated. Following this, I identified consequences of the themes for the participants drawing directly from their account and also by drawing upon their own experience of the concept from a leadership perspective. From this, recommendations were developed to address the opportunities and challenges that dimensions of professional identity might present to careers advisers and, therefore, to leaders and managers. I tabulated the results to help me to structure the discussion and recommendation sections of the study and to share my developing ideas with my supervisor. This can be seen in Appendix 13.

c. Quality and Integrity

The method outlined above was designed to address the challenges of quality and integrity within a qualitative study as discussed in section one of this chapter, with a clear sampling strategy, transparency when engaging respondents, rigorous and accurately recorded data collection and a systematic approach to data analysis. Sensitivity to context as advocated by Yardley (2000) has been addressed through my embedded position within the field, supported by my reflective journal which maintained a connection between my own thoughts and experiences and those that I was hearing and analysing. Regular meetings with my academic supervisor during each stage of the analysis supported me in my reflection on the work and in refining the articulation of the findings.

The timescale for the analysis was shaped, to an extent, by the fact that I was due to present a workshop on my research at the AGCAS Heads of Careers Service conference in January 2013. This is an indicator that Yardley's fourth principle 'impact and importance' is met by this study as there was interest in the findings at an early stage. This factor combined with

subsequent events (my relocation and change in job role) means that for practical reasons there has not yet been respondent validation, although as section 7.6 ‘Further Research’ indicates, I hope to explore ways of following up this study. This will provide an opportunity for subsequent respondent feedback.

The workshop at the AGCAS conference provided a valuable opportunity to share my findings with a group of careers service leaders and managers, many of them careers advisers by training, and to test out some draft recommendations about the ways in which they could lead and motivate Careers Advisers in the ‘new’ employability environment. The conference took place after I had completed the first stage of analysis and was part-way through the second.

The 20 delegates had an opportunity to discuss the initial findings of this study and to provide feedback in a plenary session after discussion in smaller groups and, by request, making notes in their small-group discussions which could be retained to inform the completion of this study. Their feedback, reflecting on their experience of being a careers adviser or managing careers advisers, did not contest the super-ordinate themes that I shared. However, feedback from the delegates did provide further insight and context into the tone and approach to sharing the findings of the study which would encourage consideration of the recommendations when they are finally shared.

I had a further opportunity to discuss the findings in September 2014 in a workshop for participants on the newly introduced AGCAS Management Course, again indicating the relevance of this work to higher education careers services. On this occasion the same themes were presented building on the learning from the initial workshop. The response of those participants who were themselves careers advisers again indicated that the super-ordinate themes are relevant and also that the recommendations have resonance with their experience of managing careers advisers. The next chapter outlines the findings from the data analysis outlined above.

Chapter 5 Findings from the data

In this chapter, the findings, which emerged through the analysis of the interviews, are described. Following the IPA approach to analysis, five Super-Ordinate themes emerged in relation to the way in which careers advisers construct their professional identity. These themes are described here, illustrated with multiple quotes from the respondents. The themes are then drawn together to form a description of the professional identity of careers advisers. In the next chapter this professional identity is outlined and discussed with reference to the literature that was reviewed in chapter two. There are no references to literature in this chapter to avoid duplication.

Figure 3, below, outlines the Super-Ordinate themes with an identification of key features of those themes.

Figure 3: Super-Ordinate Themes

1. The experience of Professional Training and CPD via:
• Requirements for a professional qualification in relation to performing the role, historically and at the time of this study • The perceived relevance of the Postgraduate Diploma in Careers Guidance (DipCG) • The impact and timing of the AGCAS Postgraduate Diploma in Careers Work in Higher Education (AGCAS Diploma) • Experience of induction and Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
2. Comparison with and dependence upon the undergraduate student-facing elements of the academic and university community via:
• An awareness of differences in qualification and impact of title between careers advisers and academic colleagues • The positive impact of partnership working with academics and curricular input • The nature and position of key contacts within academic departments and their impact on the role of the careers adviser • The connection between the university's research agenda and careers advisers
3. Drawing credibility from elsewhere via:
• The impact of job title • Drawing on previous non careers-advisory experience • The importance of links to graduate recruiters • The perceived status of the institution • Institutional recognition of the careers service
4. Framing purpose and feeling rewarded through student interactions and outcomes rather than through the lens of institutional goals via:
• The depth of feeling in relation to working with and helping students • A sense of the extent to which being a careers adviser is a strategic role
5. Through a range of conceptualisations of the role such as:
• 'Specialist', 'Non- Expert', 'Generic', 'Facilitator', 'Educator','Empowering Educator'.

In terms of the impact of the 'new' employability climate on careers advisers' sense of professional identity, these features emerged:

- The experience of, or anticipation of, change
- The potential for a greater profile within the institution but with 'no place to hide'.
- Duplication of careers advisers' work by other parts of the institution
- A lack of resource to meet increased demand
- A tension between working within departments and preserving a central service

This chapter considers each of the Super-Ordinate themes in turn before discussing the impact that careers advisers feel the 'new' employability climate is having on their professional identity.

5.1 The experience of Professional Training and Continuing Professional Development

There was a sense amongst careers advisers that their experience of professional training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) influenced their professional identity. In this section their experience of professional training through qualification routes, and their experience of CPD as part of their role is explored.

a. Professional Training

The respondents who had been working as careers advisers in universities for the longest time (approaching 20 years), reflected on the fact that this is a role where historically, a qualification had not been required. In the words of Jonathan;

> *"..that was at a time when , rightly or wrongly, an awful lot of careers staff, a, were men and ,b, were frequently retired members of the armed forces for some bizarre reason. There were a lot of them about. Some of them were very good*

because they had good personnel dealing styles and some of them were just horrendous old buffers who frankly just wanted to cruise away in a corner somewhere in a university until they retired properly"

And, according to Frances:

"When I joined it was all full of grey men. It was nice little number that you did after your retirement. Do you remember them?"

I can relate to this observation as when I entered careers work in higher education in 1998, I experienced a sense of an 'old' and a 'new' generation of careers advisers, with the older generation being male and not from a careers advisory background, all performing their roles well. Based on my experience of meeting and working with university careers advisers across the sector over the last 17 years I recognise the range of professional qualifications across the sample for this study which are outlined below:

Table 8: Qualifications of Respondents

Qualification	**Number of Respondents**	**Percentage of Sample**
Postgraduate Diploma in Careers Guidance (DipCG)	9	43%
Qualification in Careers Guidance (QCG)	2	9.5%
AGCAS Diploma in Careers Information, Education, Advice and Guidance	5	24%
Working towards the AGCAS Diploma	2	9.5%
No careers-related qualification	3	14%

The findings suggest that each of these routes have a distinct influence on professional identity so they are discussed in turn here:

i. The Postgraduate Diploma or Qualification in Careers Guidance (DipCG or QCG)

As described in chapter 2, The DipCG was a two stage qualification; 'part one' required a year of full-time study with a number of assessed work placements, and a further assessed 'probationary year' while working. On passing the probationary year, a careers adviser was awarded the full Diploma. For those who took the Qualification in Careers Guidance (QCG, a newer iteration of the Postgraduate Diploma) at the point that it was introduced, undertaking a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 4 in Guidance during the first year of working, achieved the equivalent of the probationary year and therefore the DipCG. The NVQ in Guidance at levels 3 and 4 are also available as stand-alone qualifications but an NVQ alone is not seen as equivalent to a DipCG or to a QCG with an NVQ level 4 qualification.

There were respondents who felt that possession of the DipCG made a strong contribution to their sense of feeling like a professional;

> *"ever since I've had this diploma in careers guidance, that gives that professional stamp"* (Stephanie).

Mathilda expressed a strong sense that her DipCG is a professional qualification, and regretted the fact that it is now offered less widely and that the NVQ level 4 in Guidance is available because;

> *"It's a qualification that people can pick up quite easily now.. you are getting the feeling that where does that profession sit now if everyone is getting it? If they're taking away the professional courses that were once there."*

Although, the DipCG has been the main route to qualification as a careers adviser in the UK (prior to the introduction and impact of Connexions), respondents who had taken the DipCG, did not feel that it equipped them for their roles in universities;

> *"I feel like the training I had was not adequate enough to prepare me in a lot of ways for the type of demands that are being placed on careers advisers now"* (Christina).

Sam commented:

> *"not everything I do is reliant on my QCG, obviously."*

A number of respondents commented on the fact that the DipCG focussed on working with young people in schools which made it less relevant to their longer term ambition which was to work in a university. Clare, a mature career changer, who did not enjoy her course, particularly disliked the placement element because she had to go into a school; it was only when she was able to arrange a brief placement, herself, at a university that she felt that she had not made the wrong decision in changing her career. Grace also commented on this issue:

> *"It was all directed at schools. I rewrote the rules for myself because I knew what I wanted to do."*

The focus on schools also had an impact on the experience of course assignments. Johanna, who was taking the NVQ4 in guidance while working in their current role in a university, had this experience;

> *"I'd go into meetings with..or teaching weekends, with mostly school careers advisers and then being told, literally, about how to go and do my observation in schools, because they couldn't cope with anything that was outside that, and it would have to be school, because... Well, I don't do schools. So I have to write assignments on school careers. I went OK. [laughs].....that was quite tedious."*

Respondents specifically mentioned a lack of training in curriculum development and what graduate recruiters and employers look for when

shortlisting CVs and application forms. Some felt that their courses focussed on information and less on the theory and practice of guidance.

This suggests that although the DipCG was for many years established as the core qualification for careers advisers and is widely considered to be an appropriate qualification for working as a careers adviser in higher education, it does not necessarily provide the level of preparation for the role that has been assumed.

Although the DipCG is a 'Postgraduate Diploma' it is possible to take the qualification without a first degree as was the case for Duncan. He joined his institution first in a hybrid role (careers adviser and community development officer), and then fully as a careers adviser and recounted his experience of feeling like a professional amongst his DipCG-qualified peers:

> *"From a peer point of view it was really strange because of my route into the career service. I had to, on more than one occasion actually emphasize the fact that I did have the diploma in careers guidance. I wasn't one of those individuals that was brought in to do a piece of work and then I'd be going. I said no I've got my diploma in careers guidance. I've done my training... On that level I think Kudos was granted [laughter]. ..At the same time I think, because of my unorthodox route into higher education and my unorthodox route into the careers centre, I wasn't a graduate. Therefore, I felt as though that input hampered how I was viewed in terms of a professional."*

It is interesting to note the peer response to that respondent's lack of a first degree, despite the possession of the 'core' professional qualification. This raises a question about the level of qualification that careers advisers consider to equip them for their role. Although the DipCG is vocationally relevant, this response – a single response to this issue as this was the only respondent not to have a first degree - suggests that possession of a degree also contributes to careers advisers' sense of professional identity. The role of academic qualifications is discussed further in section 2 of this chapter when considering careers adviser's relative sense of their qualifications and the impact of that on how they view themselves.

ii. The AGCAS Diploma in Careers Information, Education, Advice and Guidance

As described in chapter two, the AGCAS Diploma is the qualification that is offered to those who begin working as a careers adviser in a university and have not undertaken any of the qualifications described above. There are some university careers services who prefer to, or are comfortable recruiting people to be a careers adviser who come from different professional backgrounds, as they feel that the difference in background adds value, either through direct experience or contacts.

The notable difference within this sample and more generally, between those careers advisers with a DipCG and those undertaking the AGCAS Diploma is that the AGCAS Diploma is studied while working as a careers adviser in a university. Feedback from the respondents suggests that the relevance of the study and the qualification to their professional role is valued:

> *"And I remember doing a project as part of the equal opportunities module where I was sort of tracking the profile of the students that come into the service, in terms of age, ethnicity, disability etc. That was just for the project, but then I carried that on in my role because I noticed that that was something that wasn't happening. We were taking statistics. We weren't actually tracking the percentage of different groups. So, that's now carried on, and somebody else has taken on that role now but yes. So, I was able to apply the theories to the actual role yes. Which is good because sometimes you don't get to do that with courses do you?"* (Emma)

Those respondents who took the AGCAS Diploma also encountered guidance training for the first time. These two responses illustrate their positive experience alongside the challenges they faced:

"I'm halfway through my AGCAS diploma. Just halfway through. Loving it and hating it. Yes, I mean, I suppose I've spent the last few years trying to work out where I am in terms of what careers areas interest me, I did that as well, and then, sort of particularly where I am on the guidance spectrum and all that sort of stuff, so it 's been quite interesting actually." (Frederick)

"I was one of the first cohort to do the AGCAS diploma and it was transformational..... On the one hand I had old fashioned recruitment colleagues who didn't get this idea that maybe you should ask the student. It wasn't just pontificating about your days at the city [laughs]. On the other hand I had almost the extreme, "you must ask the student how they feel". In order to pass my AGCAS Diploma I had to fake my interview." (Frances)

These comments provide an interesting observation on the challenges of defining 'guidance' as a professional skill; in the late 2000s when careers service developments in a number of universities led to a clearer definition of the careers adviser role, guidance was often cited as the activity demonstrating a clear distinction between careers advisers and other student-facing roles within a careers service. As Frederick and Frances suggest, guidance is a skill where conceptualisation and delivery can be, or can be felt to be, driven by individual preferences, rather than a consistent professional definition.

iii. No careers-related qualification

Three of the respondents did not have a careers-related qualification and were not planning to work towards one. For Ellie there was an interesting conflict between how she saw her role and her approach towards qualifications. In terms of her professional identity she was clear about its core;

"..I think the crux of that professional identity comes in, for me, the sense of the guidance aspects and that whole – if you're anything then what's the heart of it? It's helping people develop, chose, progress their careers. And if I'm not doing that through a one-to-one and maintaining my guidance expertise, what's there? You know? What's at the heart of it?"

However, when it came to discussing qualifications, and taking a careers-related qualification, Ellie goes on to say:

"I did the master's in human resource management. [Then] there was a debate, "Do I do the guidance qualification or do I do CIPD?" Because of my HR background and my interest, I thought it best to do CIPD, so I did that. I toyed with doing the guidance qualification again a few years later, but instead did the Level B and MBTI, 16PF....I think I'll go back again. I'll probably do the guidance qualification. But for me, I think, again based on my interest in, almost projects, tangible outcomes, I think those were the ones that I was personally drawn to."

Ellie's strong belief in the role and value of guidance in terms of her professional identity, does not translate into the prioritisation of formal training in this area. Her explanation for this, that she is drawn to 'tangible outcomes', resonates with the findings in relation to the AGCAS Diploma in that the applicability of the Diploma to the role is valued by those who take it. Ellie's comments also align with those of Frances and Frederick in relation to the AGCAS Diploma and guidance. For all its perceived importance to the role of the careers adviser 'guidance' does not appear to be a sufficiently defined professional skill for careers advisers in universities to feel confidence in the training that is associated with it.

Anne also does not have a careers-related qualification and came from a professional Human Resources background so is a qualified member of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD). Her experience was that;

"There was certainly no encouragement at all to do the AGCAS Diploma because I had my CIPD qualifications."

This suggests that for her careers service, the CIPD qualification was 'equivalent' to a qualification in careers guidance. This assumption surfaces again below in section 1.b in relation to Continuing Professional Development.

On the other hand, some participants have qualifications that although not directly related to careers guidance, allows them to articulate a clear identity which is relevant to the setting in which they work. Sam and Jonathan have PhDs. They spoke in very positive terms about how the PhD helps them in their professional identity, particularly in relation to working with academics. Their experience is also relevant to the theme of 'Comparison with the student-facing elements of the academic and university community' and is discussed in section 2a, below.

This section has illustrated that careers advisers in higher education have largely followed two qualification routes; the DipCG which, for some, was not adequate preparation for the role and the AGCAS Diploma which for some, did not confer a confidence in guidance skills, which are core to the role, yet are seemingly defined and delivered in line with personal views and preferences. The lack of a fixed qualification that governs entrance to the field, typical of traditional professions, is further exemplified by participants with qualifications from other disciplines such as human resource management. This denotes an absence of professional socialisation which begins as entrants to a profession are trained together for their chosen field of work.

Having identified a diversity of entry and qualification routes, I will now consider careers advisers' experience of induction and continuous professional development once they are in the role.

b. Induction and Continuing Professional Development

When reflecting on their experience of feeling like a professional as a careers adviser in higher education, respondents with a qualification in careers guidance as well as those entering directly from another area of work raised their experiences of induction and the early days in their role. Their comments suggest a sense of being 'in at the deep end' and that it was down to them to settle themselves in.

Grace, who started working in higher education after completing a DipCG commented:

> *" Coming here, I didn't have a formal induction.....I haven't had any formal training on being a careers adviser since I started so I've learnt, I've pulled myself up basically through the difficult first year really*."

Those who had previously worked in another area expressed their experiences more strongly, expressing a sense of pressure and a lack of confidence when they first started practising;

> *"I actually found it quite unnerving. I found the transition to be careers adviser quite hard, because there was definitely a feeling in those days, I'm not saying now... you can do this, you've been an HR Manager so you know what to do*." (Anne)

> *"Even when I started, I didn't actually know what I was doing. I didn't really know what I was getting into and absolutely had a crisis of identity at that stage."* (Frederick)

> *"When I first started, I didn't know diddly-squat about anything. Really! I had this education background, what did I know? In the first duty query I had, and you're just stuck at this desk, 'I'd like to work for an NGO', I didn't know how an NGO works. I was forever scurrying off to ask my colleagues."* (Morgan)

There is a sense here that those new to the role, regardless of their background, feel that they have been thrown in at the deep end, expected to know what to do but without training and support. This, along with feelings of isolation, is also expressed by Frances who started to work as a careers adviser in the early 1990s.

> *"My first few years were incredibly lonely because pretty much you were left on your own to do your thing. I mean, it was the old era. People will have no idea.... Literally, before, they sat you down and gave you a pile of AGCAS booklets and said, 'There you are', It was the old-fashioned an hour at a time, 'Your first client will turn up at 10.00 if they turn up.'*

All the respondents referred to their CPD in response to the question about 'feeling like a professional as a careers adviser in higher education' but it is important to note that for Morgan, despite initially not knowing "diddly-squat about anything" she has gone on to have a positive experience of CPD:

> *"I think internally, all this training and everything that I've done I have felt very supported as part as one of the team here. .... I don't know if we're exceptionally well treated, I certainly feel exceptionally well treated. I know of others who've had to pay for some of their training, whose managers have maybe been a little bit more difficult about letting them have time off to do training things, Head of Careers Service has never been anything but really supportive.....and my colleagues are very good, they're lovely people, they're very generous [with their time]."* (Morgan)

Jean also had a similar experience:

> *"To begin with, I didn't feel that professional about it. Having progressed quite far through the diploma, and having been on various other training courses, and talked to colleagues about their*

experiences and we sometimes share... but we're always popping into each other's offices; 'I had a hard one today, what would you have done?'. The more you do that ...and also you say 'I did this, was that right?' [and] they say, 'actually yeah, that is exactly what I'd have done'. It starts to build your confidence that actually you are feeling a bit more professional about what you do." (Jean)

In both these cases, informal support from colleagues in developing practice is seen as valuable and suggests that learning on the job and becoming part of a team are part of the process of feeling like a professional as a careers adviser in higher education. It is interesting to note that the reference to the Head of Careers Service (above) is the only mention of a careers service management figure in relation to CPD within the interviews.

For others, their experience of CPD has been less positive, either through a sense of lack of support more broadly or at a sufficiently early stage in their career:

"So, you're expected to be a professional, but you're not necessarily given the tools to help yourself develop into the professional that you want to be. You have to be creative in the ways that you learn and access that information....I do feel we fall down on the training." (Grace)

"I was really thrown in at the deep end. I must have had some kind of training. I had some observed appointments and things like that, but no going off on training because it was about four or five years later before I ended up on an AGCAS interview skills course, which was very useful at that point, but it would have been really handy to have done it about four or five years earlier." (Anne)

Ben, who has a QCG also talked about the issue and shared his perception of the culture of professional development amongst careers advisers and careers services within higher education. It followed on from a discussion

about his own sense of professional credibility and an observation when he gained his QCG;

> *"I'd love to be able to sign passport photos and we're not on that list. That was like the biggest disappointment when I actually got my QCG. Just double check I can do this. No, I can't. You have to be a teacher or something."*

His comments suggest that he would prefer a formal CPD standard and requirement to reinforce his own professional identity:

> *"...you are expected to maintain your professional skills through AGCAS training. It's not mandatory and you're not tested against it... you can just be a careers adviser for 30 years. Some people do. They don't get on with AGCAS. They avoid it. I'm not going to say or give names but I've met people...'I probably won't go to biennial training sessions. They're not for me. I've been doing this for 15 years'.. Maybe you might be doing it wrong and with bad habits. Do I think that we should be forced to do more training? Or required as it were to pass reviews? Yes actually… although we haven't, but yes I do. "*

The findings in relation to professional training, induction and CPD suggest that careers advisers find themselves on a steep learning curve when they first begin working in higher education even if they join with an apparently relevant qualification. Through learning on the job, undertaking training and with the support of colleagues, careers advisers develop a stronger sense of feeling like a professional in their role. However there seems to be an absence of structure and rigour, certainly to CPD, which undermines that feeling. The next section considers the ways that careers advisers' self-perception is influenced by their own comparisons of themselves with academics and their experience of interaction with a particular dimension of the academic role.

5.2 Making comparisons with, and being dependent upon, the largely undergraduate taught-student-facing elements of the academic community.

This theme addresses the impact on professional identity of careers advisers' own comparisons of themselves with academics and their perception of the academic role and also their reliance on academics to carry out professional activities. Working with academics or through academics to gain access to students and deliver, for example, group talks and workshops, curricular input and drop-in advice and guidance sessions is a feature of the professional responsibilities of a careers adviser. All the respondents referred to work with or through academics when talking about their role and experience. 19 of the 21 respondents had an element of their caseload which specifically required faculty, school or departmental liaison and delivery.

a. Comparison with academic qualifications

The key comparison which emerged when respondents spoke about feeling like and being recognised as a professional as a careers adviser in higher education, was that of qualification. Within the sample of 21, 20 have a first degree. In terms of other postgraduate qualifications, one of the respondents had a Masters degree and two had PhDs. A number of respondents suggested that comparison between their qualifications and those of their academic contacts and colleagues had an impact on their professional identity. This is illustrated by the comments below:

> *"I suppose the qualifications issue of a Bachelors degree, and maybe if I had a Masters degree or a PhD, I would be seen in a stronger light maybe." (*Pat)

> *"within the actual institution, I became very aware that I've only got a degree. I don't have either a masters or PhD, that academics, these things are important to academics. I always felt that I was sort of*

being judged for not having those academic interests. This is my own mindset of course." (Frederick)

"I think it [an MA] might give me more. I might feel like 'oh, OK, yes, I've got the academic qualification." So perhaps where you're expected to be more like a lecturer you can feel a bit more like you've done all the research. You're like a master of your field. (Christine)

"I think maybe to some extent this is just me but, the way I was brought up et cetera, you were only as good as the number of qualifications you have, therefore working in this environment I tend to take the feeling that I'm inferior because all these people have got PhDs and doctorates." (Clare)

This sense of 'inferiority' when comparing a degree and career guidance qualification to 'academic' qualifications is also conveyed here:

"I also did it [Postgraduate Certificate in Education and Training] maybe to give me a little bit more kudos with academics to show that I am qualified in a teaching element, so I can create modules and create curriculum on your behalf." (Mathilda)

These comments are in contrast to the two respondents who have a PhD, the first also having taken the AGCAS Diploma.

"....I don't know whether my professional identity comes from the doctorate or from the careers adviser bit or a combination of the both really. I feel with academics I've got instant credibility with them but I suspect that comes from the doctorate, not from the careers bit." (Sam)

"I think it really, really helps having a PhD" (Jonathan)

It is also interesting to note the self-confidence of Frances, the Oxbridge graduate and one of those who spoke the most positively about their worth as a careers adviser. First in her family's generation to go to university, she described her experience thus:

> *"If you've been to Oxbridge...you are basically bright....I'm actually very comfortable in my intelligence but I have met plenty of people much brighter than me. Quite a lot of people are quite intellectually humble, because you know you're bright, you just don't get there without it. But actually you also know the spectrum. Therefore, you're often quite relaxed about your intelligence, you take it for granted. You often have an intellectual security that lots of people don't ever have.* "

Talking about their career choice and the fact that in their non-Oxbridge-institution's careers service there are a number of Oxbridge graduates, they go on to say

> *"You tend to like universities, you see. Because you come to it all with education, and you're bookish, and you're reflective, but we don't have many Oxbridge alpha males and females, they're all somewhere else. But the reflective ones...it's my personal theory...it's bright people who don't fit. It's a great profession for us."*

This suggests that the intellectual validation of her Oxbridge experience has helped Frances to feel confident as a careers adviser as working alongside and comparing herself to academics in her institution does not invoke feelings of inferiority. Frances' focus is on working within an academic environment which is one in which she feels entitled to be.

b. Seeking similarities with the academic role

i. Recognition of Expertise

Reflection on 'being recognised as a professional in the academic environment' suggests that careers advisers look for similarity between their role and that of an academic to validate their professional identity. This can take the form of an academic's recognition of a careers adviser's expertise. Paul spoke positively about a very public endorsement:

> *"Well, one of the best examples was something that happened with an academic. I went to a HEA [Higher Education Academy] conference on the employability of psychology graduates. One of the guest speakers at this event was the course leader, actually in psychology at institution. In a crowd of about 200 people, careers advisers, HE people and academics, he said 'Most of what I've done over the last 10 years has been based on advice that I've been given by the careers advisers at institution, more especially Paul ', and he looked at me. I had a big head then [laughs]. I can still remember it. "*

Other demonstrations of expertise to academics included requests for contributions to university-wide initiatives and to speak to academics on particular topics including career issues for international students and the methodology behind the annual Destinations of Leavers of Higher Education Survey (DLHE). Sam who ran the DLHE session for a particular faculty observed:

> *"I do know quite a lot about DLHE and it was nice, really, to go into that situation and there was someone there from each of the component departments at that faculty so there were about 15 people there. I didn't feel particularly challenged or anything by it. They didn't really throw anything at me that I couldn't really deal with. I think I really was seen in that situation as a professional who knew something about something that they didn't really. That was really*

pleasing as a new member of staff at this institution to be able to go in and get instant credibility with a group of my peers really. It felt like they were peers."

ii. Partnership and Curricular Input

Another example of feeling like a peer as articulated above, was being considered to be part of the staff team within a faculty. However the findings suggest that for many careers advisers, the most powerful partnership with academics in relation to professional identity was to deliver teaching and other curricular inputs. This seems to bring together academic recognition of expertise with a sense of parity. This was expressed both through experience of such teaching and through frustration where careers advisers were unable to have a curricular input as part of their professional responsibilities.

Pat commented that:

"I suppose, thinking about all my careers adviser experience, having careers embedded into the curriculum that is assessed and part of the degree is the real best outcome....I really appreciate that and I think it's, in some ways the whole careers service has got the kudos of the professionalism through the curriculum rather than, maybe, necessarily as individual careers advisers.'

Christina spoke about her experience of delivering a module in partnership with an academic colleague and suggests that while a qualified and experienced careers adviser, it was the curricular input that really appealed to them:

"I've been working with a lecturer in Anthropology where they've got a module called "Anthropology and Careers." That's probably a good example of this particular member of staff who had designed a module and she's invited me to help contribute with that. I've done some

sessions, and I've helped with looking at the assessment, the portfolios and things. That did feel really good, actually.... I did enjoy that. I felt that what was what I wanted. When I envisaged this job, that was the kind of thing I wanted to do, so that was good. "

For Emma, her example of being recognised as a professional illustrated a sense of parity through partnership, but in addition to this, her use of language suggests that outside of the academic context, Emma feels 'invisible' as a careers adviser within her institution;

"We participate in some of the subject areas that have careers or workplace modules, such as the business studies careers module. So myself and colleagues have taught on that. That's another way of making yourself visible... I do the lectures on CVs and interviews. We also have held the mock interviews as well. The lecturers and the advisers will deliver mock interviews to students. So there's partnership there. "

The lack of opportunity for academic partnership or curricular input was strongly felt by Duncan where the debate seems to have uncovered an issue of recognition and perception of the careers adviser's role by another professional group within their institution:

"Recognition for what might be termed as teaching or lecturing. Up at ResearchersInstitution you do a careers module and you've got careers advisers that teach on that module and that module is assessed. From a careers point of view...I think that's something we are missing at our own institution. We just can't seem to get an agreement on a module. No that's wrong. We can get an agreement on a module but the content of the module we can't get an agreement on and the fact that the thing needs to be assessed. For some reason, we're not seen as capable of assessing anything. I said you just need the training. Give us the training. The University offers a PGCT [postgraduate certificate in teaching]. It currently is on offer to

staff, but the people that run the course are not keen for careers advisers to enter it."

While this section has included consideration of the perception of the academic view of careers advisers, for Duncan in this instance, it is not academics but administrative or professional service staff who appear to be reluctant to consider careers advisers as legitimately delivering curricular input. This might suggest that while careers advisers are focussed on a comparison with academic colleagues, there may be other groups of staff within institutions who influence the way in which careers advisers see their role.

c. Seeking Access

Through the interview process, it became apparent that for many careers advisers their academic contacts are also gatekeepers to their professional practice, thus having an impact on their sense of being recognised as a professional. This reliance was articulated on a number of occasions:

"Although I do some central stuff, a lot of my either training or events I have to rely completely, certainly for PhDs, for the faculty trainers to put me in their programmes, to publicise things that I've got coming up." (Anne)

Christina articulated her reliance more strongly while describing a very positive working arrangement with a department which is actively interested in the employability of its students:

"They're really interested. They've got that awareness of the wider agenda. They recognize that their students need that kind of help in order to go on to the best jobs. I suppose it very much depends who's in charge of each school. That sets the tone. I'm kind of at the mercy of that, just because of the level I'm working at. I'm not a manager. I'm sort of operational staff. That can be quite difficult."

Stephanie felt that she had found a way to ensure access but that it was partly down to her preferred personal approach. She recognised the challenge for colleagues who may not be similarly inclined:

> *"I'm a naturally outgoing person so I don't send an email and let it vanish in cyberspace. I actually take myself off to their office and knock on their door. I don't give up. If there are three students waiting, I just join the queue. And so, I have been able to build up fantastic working relationships with the departments I work with. But I guess that's because it's my personality. I do know that some colleagues have more problems and some find their department impenetrable... almost a tenaciousness that you've got to build into the job if you want to work and have a good relationship with academics."*

Some articulated the frustration of their experience of academics not recognising what they could offer as a careers adviser, in this case, with a vocationally-focussed department with its own placement unit;

> *".....they just don't see the value, they don't see the...some of the academics, you're knocking your head against a brick wall with them. You're in course committees and they say, 'What are you doing here?' It's rudeness actually. Complete and utter rudeness."* (Sarah)

Another respondent working with a similar department in a different institution had the same experience:

> *"They're really difficult too, to get in with, because the course leaders and the lecturers are so firmly embedded with employers themselves. They feel quite often that we're just superfluous to requirements."* (Grace)

Mathilda felt that she was interacting with students in ways that ran counter to her professional judgement and experience because of the access she was given:

"I've built great relationships with the academics I've worked with in my faculties, but it's always the same, 'Could you do a CV?' or 'Can you do an interview skills workshop?'...There's never like an opportunity for us, and maybe that's because we're such a small team, to maybe meet with academics and say, 'What are you going to be doing in the first, second and third year, and is that really appropriate?' One thing that does frustrate me is because there's a lot of freedom in the first year they do do a lot of sessions which I feel would be more relevant leading on to second and third years. They do stuff on CVs and applications and interview techniques in the first year when really they're just finding their feet. They're just starting out and that really does frustrate me."

This illustrates the importance of academic recognition of the careers adviser role that includes a clear understanding of the process of student career planning and development. Without this understanding, the full range of careers adviser expertise will not be fully appreciated, and well-intentioned steps towards close working relationships will undermine the positive sense of professional identity that can be achieved by a strong partnership between academics and careers advisers.

d. The Careers Adviser's Academic

While articulating a desire for greater recognition by academics because of the sense of professional affirmation that it appears to confer, the responses above also suggest that some careers advisers have focussed on the (undergraduate) student-facing element of the academic role as the main, if not the only, element, to the role. This is quite a different conceptualisation of the role from that of Becher and Trowler (2001) described in chapter two.

There were respondents who seemed aware of this and therefore had another perspective on the 'access' issue described above in section (d) of this chapter;

"Often academics don't engage. It's that people don't understand the academic tunnel vision. It's because they're so focused, not that they think we're a low life." (Frances)

"Because, of course, academics are busy people too. They can nod, and they say 'Isn't that wonderful? Isn't that great, you do that?' But then life catches up with them and they've got assessments, and they've got papers, and they've got lectures to do, and sometimes it doesn't translate into the action that, perhaps, you and I would think would be most helpful, but I do understand. It's not personal." (Morgan)

Others distinguished the type of academics they worked with from the broader grouping.

"I always point out that as careers advisers, generally we tend to deal with the nice academics because it's their roles. They're the ones who get involved in the career stuff, tends to be the nice ones who care about the students." (Anne)

"I think, within myinstitution you will always have those academics who are very research focused, very, perhaps linear in their view of how he ought to be and how the college ought to be. But actually we are seeing increasingly, particularly with the younger academics, who tend to be the ones who liaise more with the careers service, they are embracing it [employability] a lot more. Every year I run two workshops for junior academics as part of their professional development programme." (Frederick)

Stephanie has a very clear perception of how she feels academics in her institution perceive liaison with the careers service:

"We have a unique system here where we have representatives in academic departments. They are called Departmental Careers Advisers, where an academic department nominates a member of staff who's responsible for communicating with the careers service. But actually, they see it as a Cinderella job. It's not something that people necessarily enjoy. There are very, very few academics who really do enjoy it, who put themselves out for students, who want to support students, but within their field if they were to say, 'I'm also a Departmental Careers Adviser', people would just say 'Oh you poor thing' [laughs] rather than 'Oh wow, good for you.' So it is a Cinderella position for them."

It is interesting to note that Stephanie, a careers adviser herself accepts that in an academic context, adopting her own title would be considered a "Cinderella position." It is also interesting that based on Stephanie's account, the academic departments use the title 'careers adviser' to denote responsibility for liaising with the careers service, apparently not associating that title with a distinct role for which some form of professional training and experience is required. This relates back to the discussion about recognising careers adviser's qualifications and expertise in section 2(a)(i) in this chapter.

By contrast, and illustrating the difference between institutional cultures, Pat reinforced the impact that a senior academic contact had on his professional identity, when reflecting on his work in a previous institution:

"When I first started, and this was the case for all my colleagues there, we had meetings with the head of the faculty, the head of the school for about half an hour. So that gave me huge credibility and kudos in Institution. When I had my meetings with the careers liaison officers they were 'Oh, I see. You've already had a meeting with the Dean.' It was a very strong and powerful relationship so I felt my kudos within the institution was really high."

Only three of the respondents' caseloads included the provision of support to research students and/or early career researchers and through this, made some reference to their institutions' research activity. Of those, Anne articulated a sense that having such a connection could be helpful in terms of the profile of their work and the support and access they received from academic colleagues:

> *"We did a web survey about 12 years ago and, that wasn't common at the time, and we had about 400,500 responses, put together..[a] five or six page report which we sent out across the university thinking 'well, it's there, the message came out strong'... What we hadn't anticipated when we published that report, is how much interest we'd get from academics because certainly we were talking to them about things which they were interested in... That's when we sussed out, actually, politically, doing work with postgrads [researchers] is really important."*

Anne's observations also serve as a reminder that the careers adviser focus has traditionally been on the undergraduate student. This is one dimension of the academic experience and of their interaction with students; there will be established academics whose work is more focused on taught masters and postgraduate research students in line with their areas of research. The comments in this section suggest that the 'careers adviser's academic' is undergraduate-focused (whether their focus is through choice or duty) or at an early stage in their career.

The findings so far suggest that careers advisers can gain limited confidence through their experience of training, induction and CPD of their professional abilities within their role. Comparison and interaction with the strongly influential academic role has a mixed experience with some careers advisers feeling valued and respected and others feeling dismissed or mis-understood. It is perhaps unsurprising that in this context careers advisers

seek alternative sources of credibility within their role. In the next section of this chapter, the ways in which they do this are considered.

5.3 Drawing credibility from elsewhere

a. Context

The words 'credibility' or 'kudos' were used by nine of the 21 respondents, even though they did not feature in the questions that shaped each of the discussions. It was also apparent across the sample that the primary source of professional credibility for careers advisers is not in the role itself. Responses suggest that this could be because the role is not widely understood and is not perceived to have a high status. The way in which careers advisers perceive their role to be understood by those outside the field and their sense that their role is not perceived to have a high status are explored briefly here before considering the sources of credibility that careers advisers feel they possess:

i. External understanding of the role

Careers advisers spend the majority of their role dealing with students. Yet they feel that the changes to careers guidance provision in schools as outlined in chapter 1 will influence the way in which they are perceived by students:

> *"I think that's... not professional identity, it's reputation as well. I think if they've [students] come through, and they've not had good experience with careers at schools or I suppose now, with what probably would have been Connexions.. if they've had negative experiences, I think they often bring that with them and they, ... you stand up to do anything, CMS [Career Management Skills].. The first comment will often be oh, we've done this before. You know, they've had an experience at a lower level that possibly wasn't very good, and*

they always perceive the careers thing as not interesting or not different..." (Sam)

Jonathan, who moved into work as a careers adviser from a research and graduate recruitment background, became a head of service but now, following a period as a senior graduate recruiter, has chosen to return to work as a careers adviser observed;

"I think the issue careers advisers might have, in terms of self-perception of their professional identity, is that there aren't many people outside universities who really know what goes on. Unfortunately there can be some truly awful dispensing of what is called careers advice in woefully under resourced schools."

This lack of understanding, in Sam's experience extended to some academics within their institution:

"I think academics as you get to know them better do understand more of what you actually do. But, I think, at times it's frustrating when their very superficial knowledge of the Careers Service [sic]. They think it's where students go to get their CVs checked and that is about the scale of it really."

The relationship between careers advisers and academics has been discussed above. However, one particularly striking response in relation to academic recognition came from Grace who felt that her parents, both academics, didn't understand or value her role;

"My parents worked for institution as lecturers on the PGCE primary and the BA primary and the access to teacher education. You'd think that they would, having a daughter who's a careers adviser working in a careers setting, that they would take it on board more. But they were so ignorant about it. They just didn't have a clue what I did. Even now my dad is like, 'I don't really know what you do but it earns you money so it's good and I'm sure it's valuable to someone'. But he didn't see the relevance to students at all. Even when I discussed it

with him he just couldn't understand how a careers adviser could possibly help anyone."

ii. Perceived status

A number of respondents reflected a perception that their role was not considered of high status. Frances, an Oxbridge graduate working elsewhere recalls meeting a current student from her old college at a careers fair:

"A student came up and showed me their CV and they happened to go to my Oxbridge college and so without thinking about it....."Oh, I went to Oxbridge College', and looking absolutely appalled they said 'what went wrong?' It's true, absolutely true. Clearly he thought I went to Oxbridge, so what am I doing sitting in this careers fair checking out people's CVs?"

The comment surprised her as she feels very positively about being a careers adviser:

" I have always been really proud of what I do..I can't believe they pay me to do it. I'm not being unapologetic. I'm a real educator. Few things make me as happy as watching someone grow."

Having subsequently moved into a management role she observed:

"What I find fascinating is that as a manager I get far more professional respect than I did as a careers adviser because people see me doing something really hard. Whereas people don't think being a careers adviser is difficult, whereas if you do it well it's bloody difficult"

Other respondents reflect this sense that the external perception of their role does not accord it a high status:

"I don't think I've ever gone to a social event and felt really confident and proud about telling people I was a careers adviser. I have been concerned about the fact that they might not think very much of that. I

suppose it's also fear that people may start asking for advice and I may not know the answer [laughter]." (Clare)

And for Sam, speaking in the same context:

"I always feel slightly odd telling people what I do. I don't want to sound embarrassed about it, or ashamed about it, or anything. But I'm not sure the profession, the image of it, is particularly good. If I say I'm a careers adviser, I'll normally say I'm a university careers adviser rather than just a careers adviser. "

Having explored the way that careers advisers perceive their role to be understood by those outside the field and their sense that the role of careers adviser is not perceived to be of high status, I will now go on to consider the sources of credibility upon which careers advisers draw.

b. Preference for an alternative job title

This issue of job title and the impression it conveys seems to reflect the perception of status of being a careers adviser. A sensitivity to job title could also be seen as a response to the awareness of differences between academics' and careers advisers' qualifications articulated below in section 3(a). Although identifying themselves as working as careers advisers, a number of respondents had different job titles or had changed role within the field and reflected on the impact of their different titles:

"My job title doesn't do me any harm. Head of Postgraduate Career Development..to be honest, maybe it gives the wrong impression. Maybe it does imply that I'm more senior than I am, but it helps get a voice heard for careers." (Anne)

Ellie, who is also facing a change to her job title commented:

"I am unclear of what my title will be. I think we were all enjoying our "head of" titles because that gives you a bit of credibility on the whole LinkedIn front. But it may become something else, it may become

something like, Senior Careers Consultant International...I don't mind so much. Whereas I think some people who are looking for career progression, that could be an issue."

Others who had recently moved into a management role within their services commented;

"Now that I'm deputy head I just call myself deputy head, and I feel happy... the deputy head role gives a status as well, I supposed. Maybe I'm playing on that to some degree." (Frederick)

"I was shocked that when I became a manager [laughs] and became a head, suddenly lots of people acted as if I'd got a real job, and I was important and I was successful, and I'd thought I was successful beforehand." (Frances)

The positive impact of an alternative title was also highlighted by the fact that two respondents who are careers advisers used the word 'just' in relation to their title. Duncan said of himself:

"I'm just a plain old careers adviser."

Frederick reflected more deeply on his newfound title of deputy head:

"And the status, I have to admit I was embarrassed to say that I was a careers adviser because I know in my own experience that I never used a careers service. I had incredibly high expectations of them when I went to careers fairs, completely unrealistic, and it just seemed to be a non-job at first. I like the teaching, I loved doing the workshops, I like the one-to-one. I was actually enjoying what I was doing. It was just the label I didn't particularly care for."

The reaction to the title ‘careers adviser’ supports an underlying sense that careers advisers feel that other people do not understand what they do and think that they are inferior. It also suggests that careers advisers themselves feel inferior; they do not like their job title when it describes their role, preferring it when the title conveys a greater organisational responsibility (‘head of’) and therefore some distance from their role.

It has been seen so far that careers advisers themselves seem to feel that they lack some professional credibility. They observe limitations within the training and development that is available to them and feel that others regard the role as being of low status. The careers advisers in this study looked elsewhere other than qualifications or public recognition for professional credibility and these are considered here. The main sources of professional credibility for respondents were their previous non-careers-advisory experience, links to graduate recruiters, their employing university and the way in which their service is viewed within their institution.

c. Non-careers-advisory experience

The experience that careers advisers had in other fields of work was a valued source of credibility for many and there was an awareness that while the experience was not always extensive or recent, it could still be used to great effect;

> *“I guess I’ve got a reputation with the people I deal with of being professional and when they hear a bit about my background that helps, even with academics. You can say ‘I’ve been a graduate recruiter, I’ve been a...’ I’m shameless about pulling out the software bit. It’s like almost 30 years out of date, but if I’ve got a bunch of computer scientists in front of me I’ll talk about writing machine code and they’ll suddenly pay attention [laughs]. So it helps with a varied background.”* (Anne)

"What I find really useful is that, especially here, and even when I work with postdocs, there is this notion of industry, "them" and "us – academia." I think people have a lot of misconceptions about what industry is like. Because I have seen many different companies, like I said, engineering companies, companies in the city, banks, trading companies, all sorts of companies, publishers, media, BBC television, that's a global company, I find that experience has really enriched everything I do." (Stephanie)

Another spoke specifically about the helpfulness of their experience in making links with academics, not just based on their qualification, but their experience:

"It's not writ large or anything, but they do talk to you and they know, because you'll say something, that you've done research, and they find out it's a PhD. And in industrial research. I was a research chemist for... 10, 12 years and there's far more rapid acceptance." (Jonathan)

Even when the 'other experience' had not been particularly positive, it was still valued. Before becoming a careers adviser, Ben had been in a management role which he had found uninteresting and pressurised. Based on this, he decided that he wanted a role that focused on working directly with students and is not considering management as a route for his own career development. However, his management experience is an asset within his current role:

"..I've always been a bit younger than my colleagues in some of the roles, and I think it's quite good that I've done something credible like that [laughs]. 'When I was managing..', I'd bring it up about twice a day, 'when I was managing a team of ten to 14 people.'...And also, we run sessions with post docs on interviewing and that sort of stuff. And I think you, obviously you have more credibility if you used to have to do that a lot."

Ben also seems to particularly value his management experience in his one-to-one work;

> *"Also, a lot of this job, you're with clients. You have to demonstrate you know what you're talking about and that you are the guru, if you like, and so to...'when I was managing,,' and 'I used to..' and '..one particular interview I carried out..' and that sort of stuff is very useful."*

There is a stronger sense in this case of a boosting of professional confidence through previous experience. This was articulated in a similar vein by Jean:

> *"I think it gives me the confidence in what I'm saying. I think it also gives the students a confidence in us. Quite often they'll say, 'What's your background?' It's almost 'What gives you the right to tell me this?' There is a not very veiled undercurrent. [laughter]."*

And also with Frederick:

> *"I've been lucky in the departments that I've worked with in that, they are all departments that either my degree or my background has given me a little bit of kudos, of credibility. My academic departments include Politics and Industrialisation that include Geography, which fits into my previous energy remit and my political geography as well, Criminology because I studied it at the university as well. Being able to bring these things does help. I have to admit when I go to the school of biological sciences I find it hard to think of myself a*s a professional, *because I lack the depth of knowledge that I feel I need to have to have informed discussions that relate to biology. Even though, actually, it'll be the same thing as we do with other departments*."

Linked to the observations about job title, being a manager within a careers service also seems to confer a greater sense of credibility. Respondents felt they had more credibility when carrying out an alternative role and through the perceived status of the people that they therefore were dealing with. This was illustrated by Sam who had previously been a head of a careers service:

"I think I was probably quite proud to say I was the head of a careers service. I think possibly I've... maybe that's a status thing. I felt that somehow perhaps gave me a bit more clout really. ..I had to liaise with quite senior people, VC, not that regularly but occasionally, I think I certainly had credibility there... But also heads of departments and things. I was liaising with the level of people. I'm probably not liaising with as much now as I did then. Yeah, I think I did feel definitely I had an identity then, an official identity."

Sarah commented on a previous regional project management role and also referred to the people and, in this case, the organisations that this gave them access to:

"I felt as if I had more of an influence. Because when I was at institution, I had a lot more responsibility than I have now, because I was doing so many different things, going up to RegionalHigherEducationAssociation and dealing with the Chief Exec, and Education NorthernCity and Education OtherNorthernCity and all that stuff. When I did the Impact stuff, again, I was influencing things regionally and I really do miss that from a professional point of view."

Although Sam and Sarah are talking about roles within a careers service setting, it is interesting to note that even in these roles they are drawing credibility from outside the field of careers advice. This aligns with the respondents above for whom 'external experience' seems to boost professional confidence. For those who have less experience of external settings, a link to external partners is highly valued. This is discussed below.

d. Links to graduate recruiters

For some careers advisers, credibility was drawn not from their own experience, but their association with graduate recruiters in their current role. Two respondents who had moved into careers work at an early stage in their career with little prior experience spoke about the credibility they felt they derived from their links with graduate recruiters.

"I've had to learn from experience to adapt and always lead with an external brief and so, they think oh, he goes out and speaks to employers. If employers are engaging with him he must be.. he must have something about... do you know what I mean?" (Duncan)

"You know, because we talk to media professionals, so I ask them about what they would look for on a, for example a CV, etc. So, then you can relay that. And I try and integrate that in my presentations, you see, because I think again, it gives more, you know, kudos that you went to this thing, and this is the feedback that the employers have given. I think it gives us more, sort of, credibility." (Emma)

Paul referred to it as part of his reflection on the fact that they felt equivalent to a Senior Lecturer when dealing with academics...

"They knew we were out and about. There was a very high understanding of what we can do. It wasn't this blinkered view that the careers adviser sat in an office all day and saw students. No, they knew that we were out and about. They knew we spoke to employers. They knew we knew what the debate was about in relation to employability."

There is a strong sense here that careers advisers derive credibility from who rather than what they know and that recognition of their role by graduate recruiters enables them to gain credibility with students and academics. Institutional recognition is also considered to be a source of credibility as discussed next.

e. Institutional recognition of the role and the service

Institutional recognition of careers advisers and careers services is a potential source of credibility for careers advisers. This is distinct from the impact of interaction with academics on careers advisers' professional identity development, which is considered in more detail in section 2 in this chapter. Institutional recognition as a source of credibility was articulated most clearly by those who had worked in more than one university and had experienced a contrast. Pat has worked at two post-1992 and two pre-1992 institutions and contrasted their experience in the newer universities where

they were a part of student services, with their experience in the more established ones where they felt they drew credibility from close working with academic colleagues and curricular input.

Grace, who works in a newer university observed:

> *"I think probably the higher up you get in the institution, the less recognised we are. I don't think the Vice Chancellor would have a clue what I do or what value I add to the University, not really.... Which, I think is a shame, because as a small team we do so much in the university with destinations and internships, placements, work experience, CVs... We do a great amount of work, but I don't think we get recognition within the wider institution we serve."*

Clare who had worked across three very different institutions observed of the previous two:

> *"I've experienced a difference between institutions. Institution1, I felt that the profile of the service was much higher than it is here. I can't really speak for Institution2 as I wasn't there for long enough. For institution1, we had a very proactive Head of Careers, and the service was fully recognised and acknowledged within the university. Therefore you were slotting into an environment where you automatically felt quite valued, not just by the careers service but within the institution generally. I think that was a lot to do with the way we were led, with the management of the service."*

Another lens through which institutional recognition was experienced was through the winning of awards. Sam, Frederick and Anne had won institutional awards for an aspect of their work. Their institutions and the work that led to the awards had been very different yet they all described a mixed experience in relation to that recognition.

Sam's was a learning and teaching award for the delivery of career management skills within the curriculum. However, because it was delivered by a careers adviser from a careers service, the award was in a 'support

staff' category. Sam was positive about receiving recognition but was aware of the categorisation of his achievement:

> *".. there were several academic teaching and learning awards and then there was a category for support staff so there was a separate one and that was the category under which I achieved it. Which in a way, to me, it almost felt like, not lesser, but it felt ... I suppose it was different and I felt in a way that I was doing curriculum based stuff in a support... I suspect not many other people were flagged under that category could have claimed that they were doing that really."* (Sam)

Frederick, along with two fellow careers advisers received an award for their experiential learning employability work with MBA students. They were the first non-academics to receive the award, having been nominated in partnership with their academic colleagues in the business school even though:

> *"the two academics didn't really have much input but we asked them to help on the day but they were part of the teaching prize too."*

He then goes on to describe the circumstances surrounding the award ceremony:

> *"They have both took [sic] a step back saying, that this is a careers initiative and they actually won't be attending the graduation ceremony when we are awarded the prize on Thursday of this week. Interestingly, the registry, the registrar's office, I get a feeling that they don't think we should be getting it. [laughs]. Certainly in terms of the admin side of it ordering our gowns and stuff. I get the feeling that, basically, as far as they are concerned, we had to fall in line with what the academics wanted. I think they are quite surprised that the academics have taken a step back and are putting us as the ones to get the prize. It is an interesting one and that could just be a personality thing rather than an institutional thing but it's been quite interesting to watch. "*

Frederick uses the word ‘interesting’, but his feelings about the ceremony suggest that perhaps this experience has led him and his colleagues to feel of lesser status in the eyes of the administrative staff. Even though the business school academics seem to respect the work of Frederick and his colleagues, based on their decision to ‘take a step back’ so that they receive the award, the protocols of the ceremony seems to have highlighted differences that Frederick feels in relation to other academics in his institution:

> *“Although, we won’t be wearing our PhD hoods and gowns and stuff, we’ll just be wearing our degrees, our degree hoods so we are going to look a bit silly I suspect. But who cares, we are going to go for this prize and the Principal will be awarding it.”*

Anne won a university Distinguished Achievement Award, one of a small number in the Professional Support Staff category. This was for their overall contribution but to particularly recognise the winning of a Times Higher Education Award for a resource they developed. Describing it as her *“equivalent of winning a BAFTA, only in a very obscure category”* she was very happy to be recognised for her work, but reflected on the institutional approach to publicising their national achievement;

> *“We don’t really do a lot of this putting stuff up for the Times Higher Award. Or if we do, it’s not very successful as a university. It’s certainly not been a strategy. So we put in for it, we got shortlisted. And then when we won it. Yeah, again that was a nice.... I think the university appreciated it actually getting an award. Although surprisingly enough, there’s nothing in print about it anywhere. There’s a couple of things on the web. It didn’t even make our staff update printed publication.”*

When asked if this was standard for their university, Anne’s response was *“No, absolutely not. They crow about these things [laughs]*”

The way in which these three award-winners have experienced their achievement illustrates differences in the way in which their institutions, or

parts of their institution, have recognised their work in relation to comparable achievements. The winning of awards is a very mixed source of credibility providing outward facing recognition and status while the individuals experience a sense of being less valued in comparison to other areas of work or categories of staff within their institution.

This section has considered the ways in which careers advisers gain credibility through other sources than qualifications and CPD. Careers advisers draw credibility from previous work experience, alternative job titles, association with graduate recruiters and from institutional recognition either of the careers service or of individual achievements through the winning of awards. This perhaps offsets some of the impact of careers advisers' experience of their professional training, induction and CPD and the way they feel in comparison with the academic role, although the way they describe their experience of gaining credibility suggests that careers advisers still have a very mixed feeling about the degree of kudos and status that they have. The next Super-Ordinate theme considers the impact that student interaction has on the way in which careers advisers construct their professional identity.

5.4 Framing a purpose and feeling rewarded through student interactions and outcomes rather than through the lens of institutional goals.

Many of the respondents spoke very positively about their job and about feeling fortunate that they do what they do;

> *"It's my lottery job. If I came up on the lottery I would still want to do it. Maybe part time [laughs]". (Anne)*

Pat described his 22 year–long career as a careers adviser as :

> *"absolutely brilliant. Yeah, I absolutely love it."*

Many respondents used very positive and emotional language when speaking about their work with students and indicate that 'the student' is what motivates careers advisers to do their job;

> *"In terms of my passion and enthusiasm, God I love it. I wouldn't change that for the world. I love the students. I love the feedback, I love it when they get what you are trying to do."* (Mathilda)

> *"I find the reward through working with students fantastic. Students is what makes my day. I love them all [laughs]."* (Stephanie)

Sarah reflected:

> *"What is professionalism? I think it's about integrity. It's about sticking to your students, learning about your students, understanding your students... but also, having the professional integrity to know your LMI [labour market information] and your knowledge base and all the rest of it."*

In the context that academic recognition plays an important part in defining professional identity (see section 3 above), it was interesting to note the relative weight that Mathilda put on academic recognition compared to student feedback:

> *"I've always maintained the fact that I am student-focused foremost and if I get plenty of feedback from academics that's brilliant, but that's where I feel I fit, with the student."*

Such commitment to the student experience and the motivation to help students reflects the purpose of the role of a careers adviser when dealing with individuals. Across higher education, employability has become an institution-wide agenda which does not yet seem to always have an impact on the careers adviser's perspective. Pat observed:

"I realise all the challenges and pressures facing higher education, not just getting graduates jobs, but also, their own, I suppose with their increased fees, and all the extra challenges. With international students, visa issues. So many issues and challenges that I can see the academics and managers of the universities have got and we just play a little small part in that."

Jean spoke appreciatively of the role their Head of Service played for them:

"Also, and I think that's the way we're structured here, we've got headofservice at the helm who's almost a buffer between us and the politics of the university. We have that relationship with them [the faculties] , but the politics of it all, the league tables and all that side of it, headofservice is our buffer. He, not protects us, but he deals with all that. For me, you can tell from my previous jobs and why I left them, that's not something I'm particularly interested in. I'm so glad that I'm in a structure where I don't have to do that, to be honest. I'd rather focus on the interesting bit for me which is the students."

A lack of interest in 'politics' and a lack of interest in a management role were expressed by a number of respondents. For example, Clare observed:

"In terms of my interests and in terms of the bits of my job that I prefer to dwell on, I'm not a great strategic thinker or manager."

Given structures in careers services, this suggests that for many careers advisers there are no prospects for career progression in the conventional sense. This may have an impact on professional identity construction. Jean observed of her progression;

"Yes but what next? Because, I don't like the next step up. I wouldn't want to be [named individual]. I just wouldn't. I don't like that, the whole politics and the budgeting. Somebody else can do that. Where do you go if you don't want that next step up? Where do you go? Who

knows? There must be a whole bunch of careers advisers feeling the same way. There must be a space we can create and we can all move into [laughter]."

Taking a different perspective, but concurring with the sense that the role of the careers adviser is student rather than institutionally focused were two respondents who had previously held management positions. Their sense was that they had moved into a role that did not expect or require broader institutional and strategic thinking. Brenda, who had previously worked as a strategic manager in a Local Education Authority observed;

"I did used to enjoy that area of work, in terms of strategically looking at what's around there. That's a big difference but I can't expect that, because that's not the job I applied for."

Sam, having been a head of service but now working as a careers adviser spoke about his change in role;

"Having been a head of service, and have taken a step back rather, it's quite frustrating because I still feel I'm thinking about it strategically, and in ways of solutions.....I'm feeling that I'm not always being listened to. That's quite frustrating because I think, well I've got a lot of stuff to contribute. I guess there's always a danger of that, if you do that career-wise. You might be in that situation, that they're not necessarily employing you because you were a head of service, they are employing you because of the other skill set that you've got."

This theme indicates that careers advisers feel that a focus on the student precludes a full consideration of organisational demands or institutional priorities as part of the role. This suggests that careers advisers have the potential to feel challenged if they are expected to balance a student focus with organisational demands in response to their institutional employability agenda.

The final Super-Ordinate theme in relation to the way in which careers advisers construct their professional identity is a theme characterised by differences; the differences in the way in which careers advisers conceptualise their role. It is described next.

5.5 Using a range of conceptualisations of the role

This "theme" emerged through a lack of convergence of views by the respondents who conceptualised the role of a Careers Adviser in a number of different ways:

- 'Non-Expert'
- Generic
- Facilitator
- Educator
- Empowering Educator
- Specialist

All but one of these conceptualisations represent an absence of a sense of specialism or expertise. The term 'general' or 'generic' was used often in relation to the role.

Clare compared her previous career with her current role;

> *"I think I felt more professional as a marketing person. I was socialising. I felt I had a niche of expertise."*

Two respondents felt very strongly that they did not want to be considered an expert as they felt that as a careers adviser they could not "know everything" in relation to possible careers and found the concept of facilitation more comfortable. A further two saw themselves as educators, another broader concept.

Only Jonathan conceptualised the role as being of great value;

> *"Now, careers advisers should be much more proud of what they do because they're at this crux between the student body, the institution and the outside world. Nobody operates there. Not with the students as well."*

The range of interpretations suggests that as a role, careers adviser is open to different approaches and positioning by those within it. This contrasts with professions such as medicine, teaching and law where the qualification and professional practices tend towards conformity of interaction with the beneficiaries of their expertise.

There was also an absence of consistent references to a 'body of knowledge' as it features in other professions. Two-thirds of the sample made references to maintaining knowledge as part of their professional responsibilities; of those who did not mention it, one expressed discomfort at not having a sense of expertise.

The single respondent, Jean, who conceptualised her role as a specialist, did so based on their focus on advising students about careers within the sector in which they had worked at a senior and influential level. For those who did not have personal experience of sectors and industries, time to develop their knowledge was an issue:

> *"I don't feel I have enough time to be a specialist and learn all those different industries."* (Sarah)

> *"I would love to say I spend loads of time reading. We get lots of books and other sources of information on this as well as surveys from employers and that sort of stuff. Do I make time to do this? I try, yeah. I probably haven't genuinely done as much reading as I want to."* (Ben)

This challenge relates to the nature of CPD and professional training outlined in section 1(b) of this chapter and by way of completing the discussion of the five Super-Ordinate themes, this last quotation relating to the fifth theme also resonates with the first, aligning conceptualisations of the role with the experience of professional training and CPD:

> *"I'd still be very green had I not done all my research into local vacancy sources and employers and opportunities, and then careers information itself. If I hadn't done that, no one else would have helped me. In terms of me being a professional, it's been very important. I think keeping my knowledge up to date, and current and relevant is just part of the ethos anyway, isn't it? That's, if you don't do your research, then how can you expect to be on top of your game? How can you deliver?"* (Grace)

This concludes the exploration of the five Super-Ordinate themes that influence the way in which careers advisers construct their professional identity; the experience of professional training, induction and CPD, comparison with the academic role, drawing credibility from elsewhere, feeling rewarded by student interaction and by conceptualising the role in a range of different ways. This study is considering the professional identity of careers advisers at a time of change and the research interviews also included a discussion about the impact that respondents felt the 'new' employability climate might have on their work and their role. The findings from this element of the interviews are explored here.

5.6 The Impact of the 'new' employability climate

Nineteen of the respondents had views on the impact of the increased focus on the employability agenda on their experience of feeling like, or being recognised as, a professional within their institutions and were experiencing, anticipating or hoping to avoid some form of change. Of the two that were not, one respondent spoke about changes at a broader, national level and the other, in Scotland, did not feel they were being affected by this because the fee regime is different there.

For four respondents, the increased interest in the work of the careers service and careers advisers was seen as a very positive development:

> *"We now feel that what we do is more supported by the university and by the management at the university. So it's great. It feels, I tell you what it feels like, it feels like you've been sort of.. It's probably a crazy analogy. It's like flying a kite. You're standing there with your kite, you're waiting for the wind, and there's a little bit of wind coming up and you try to get the thing up and it keeps coming down. Now, suddenly, we're having a really good gust of wind, and it keeps our kite up there." (*Stephanie)

> *"Certainly, I have gone into meetings, with academics for example, working with specific departments on their careers programmes and things, where they are taking a step back and saying 'look, you guys know this field, we want to learn from you and see what works and what has worked for you in the past.' Perhaps we are getting that more now than we have done."* (Frederick)

Christina felt that this interest provided an opportunity to redefine the professional identity of careers advisers;

> *"I think it could be a really good opportunity for careers advisers to create a sort of new identity, then, a more dynamic one than perhaps they had in the past, where it's not just, we do one-to-one appointments, and that's it. Get away from that model. So I think it was interesting, because I was at AGCAS Biennial last year and listened to a lot of speeches there. I think it's almost like a turning point now, where we are."*

Emma felt that in their vocational institution, there would be an increase in opportunities for careers advisers to develop their activities, but that the institutional perspective on employability did not need to change. The

other fourteen respondents welcomed the increased focus on employability in the interests of students, although as the following sections show, they also have reservations about a focus on employability leading to a focus on careers services.

a. Visibility and Accountability

Some respondents were aware that an institutional interest in employability would mean a greater interest in careers advisers' professional practices and outcomes;

> *"All those that wanted to run for cover, there's nowhere to hide. What we have is an overwhelming sense of exposure. We're going to have to change or we're going to have to work differently and there's going to be a lot more demand on our time and services."* (Duncan)

Others found the interest frustrating as it appeared to be accompanied by a lack of understanding:

> *"I think it's definitely better that there's much more attention on that [employability]. But it does put us much more centre stage than we've ever been before. We can't hide in the corner, not that I ever wanted to...I don't always feel it [professional identity] is recognised because I think people are trying to come in and say 'Well, you need to do it differently, because what you're doing isn't working.' I think they don't really know. A few years ago they weren't even interested in what we're doing and now they're telling us we're not doing it right. That can be a bit frustrating I think."* (Sam)

> *"We should be catapulted to stardom really.. we should be the first point of call for anyone to come to if they have a query about that [employability skills] but we're not at the moment. Even though, I think, the university speaks a lot of, they say the right things, but they*

don't necessarily follow up on what they're saying, they don't understand enough about us to follow up enough." (Grace)

b. The challenge of meeting demand

An increase in demand for careers service activities and for careers advisers' time was a concern for a number of respondents. Johanna contrasted her current experience with the time when careers and employability had a lower profile:

"When I first started, we were in a little building right up the road which most students walked past every day, and most of them didn't realise who we really are. It was a very Cinderella service. In the summer, you literally had to go looking for people so you wouldn't die of loneliness [laughter]. ..Now I can't think of.. I mean, there's times when you would like it quieter, but it's busy. The students are much more aware of where we are."

There was a sense that if the interest in employability was fully realised in terms of student engagement then the careers services, and careers advisers, would struggle to meet demand:

"..a lot of academic areas are now switching on to the notion that they're going to have to care about where their students go afterwards, and be able to sell that on... so we're being drawn in a lot more. I think the expectations are increasing. It's quite stressful, because I'm not sure that we get that much support, both internally and also, I have to say it, through AGCAS. I don't feel that we're really getting enough support to keep up with this." (Clare)

"[Named individual] is writing an employability paper which is driving him mad to get through the university. That will affect us and I think there'll be more demands on us, and I think we'll have to be stricter because we're such a small service." (Sarah)

c. Duplication of services

Concern was expressed that other parts of the university may also seek involvement in the employability agenda, at the expense of the careers service and careers advisers. Anne felt this was a possibility;

> *"An interesting one's going to be if we're seen as being sidelined and I think that's a real danger. I don't see it imminently, but it could tend to that, where the faculties in the schools start to put finance and resource and money, into people who look for jobs for their students and who will want to engage directly with employers. Then say 'well, what did the careers service do for us? What's the point of having that? Let's just have it all out in schools and faculties.' I think that's one of the dangers for us not being closely aligned with schools and faculties. We've got a lot better over the years. There are stronger relationships with schools and faculties but one model is to have people based within schools or faculties."*

Anne's experience of working in a devolved human resources function meant that she felt that this model could work well. Others felt that interest from schools and faculties should be turned into an opportunity to secure a central careers service position;

> *"Because in reality, anybody in school, perhaps an academic who knows the subject better than we necessarily do, can facilitate a few CV workshops, interview provision, bring alumni back. Can do the administration of some of these things, but the heart, then that makes us have more to offer than what the school has to offer – is it then this one-to-one guidance role support of career development? Maybe that's what gives us that unique extra... It's an interesting sort of debate. I think the whole employability agenda being on everybody's radar now and schools wanting to do more. There is the potential for them to do more without the need for us, and I think it's a key time to*

make sure we are part of that as well, so it's an opportunity to interact. (Ellie)

Brenda described her experience of duplication in relation to engagement with employers. The repeated use of the word 'little' conveys the depth of her feeling;

"What you tend to find is that the faculties and to some extent the courses themselves, like Law, Accountancy, employ people within the faculties. I'll give you an example. Law is one of my subject areas I've done lots of work with the law course. I suddenly found out that there was somebody who was employed there more or less full time I think. It might have been three of four days week, to develop the employer engagement. I just thought there was so much that we could do together. As it happened, we were in danger, because we didn't know about them, of duplicating effort. Now, I do know about them and we work really closely together, but there's little people beavering way in little pockets in the faculty with their own little contacts that they don't have on a database. I find that really frustrating."

d. The impact of 'employability' models

Three respondents, representing two of the 14 institutions, felt that their institutions were developing responses to the employability agenda which challenged the position and expertise of their service. Mathilda's institution has subsumed the employability agenda into a commitment to develop an entrepreneurial university which the she feel has put the careers service at a disadvantage:

"Because there's probably more money in departments like enterprise, they've managed now to run a module on how to be embedded, utilising similar skils that we're trying to develop, utilise similar presentations and workshops that we're trying.. You're just sitting here

going 'oh, stick a fork in me, I'm done now. Somebody else is doing it.' You know what I mean?'."

Paul had been directly affected by his institution's 'new' model and gave an account of his recent experience which had resulted in a voluntary severance agreement by the time the interview took place;

"Institution has decided that the solution to employability is to put everybody on placement which doesn't join up because many students don't want to do a placement... 50 percent of the resources from the careers services were taken away so that placements could be centralised. But actually it wasn't because a huge amount of money was saved in the restructuring. Some of the placement officer posts got downgraded so they could recruit more of them more cheaply. At the same time it was announced there's going to be a review of the careers service. I had already had my personal development review with the Head of Employability and she said 'the elephant in the room is that we're paying you too much money.' That does not augur well for your professional development. It was at that stage in my head, I thought 'I'm going to get out of here as soon as possible. Because if you think I'm paid too much money, then I'm going to take my ball home, if I can.' And I did... but at that stage we had gone down from five careers advisers to two."

Paul is now working on a freelance basis for another institution (not a part of this study) whose employability involves compulsory careers education modules for all students. His experience is rare but not unique in terms of institutional responses to the employability agenda and the impact on careers services.

5.7 Concluding Comments

In this chapter five Super-Ordinate themes have been explored which emerged from the data as ways in which careers advisers construct their professional identity: the experience of professional training, induction and CPD, drawing credibility from elsewhere, comparison with and dependence upon the student-facing elements of the academic community, feeling rewarded by student rather than institutional outcomes and through a range of conceptualisations of the role. Careers advisers have also shared their thoughts and experience in relation to the changes to the employability climate across the sector and within their own institutions. These findings suggest that there are issues of self-confidence, a desire for greater credibility and a reliance on endorsement and understanding by academics within the professional identity of careers advisers which are offset by a strong commitment to helping students. From this standpoint, a changing employability climate within universities seems to present careers advisers with as many challenges as opportunities to strengthen the position and impact of their role. These findings illuminate the path to a deeper understanding of the professional identity of careers advisers in higher education, which is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 6 Discussion. The professional identity of careers advisers in higher education.

The research question being addressed in this study is “What is the professional identity of careers advisers in higher education in the ‘new’ employability climate? Challenges and opportunities for careers service leaders and managers.” In this study, professional identity is defined as ‘the experience and self-understanding of those fulfilling a particular occupational role’. The themes identified in the previous chapter suggest that the professional identity of careers advisers in higher education is shaped in at least five ways: (1) by their experience of professional training and CPD; (2) by drawing credibility from elsewhere; (3) through comparison with and dependence upon the student-facing elements of the university community; (4) feeling rewarded by students rather than institutional outcomes; (5) through a range of other conceptualisations of the role. By considering these five themes, a professional identity for careers advisers in higher education as a phenomenon emerges. Following the IPA method and the number of respondents in the study, the description will be generic to represent the group theme, illustrated with references to participant accounts as they appeared in the previous chapter (Smith et al, 2009).

To summarise, by way of introduction, the professional identity of careers advisers in higher education is an identity which lacks definition and does not recognise, and is not fully recognised by, the context in which it is situated. It is an identity which balances a low sense of confidence with a strong sense of dedication to the role. These aspects are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

6.1 Careers advisers as Undefined

The term ‘Undefined’ has been chosen to reflect the absence of definition which appears to characterise the experience of being a careers adviser from professional training and induction through to job title and experience of fulfilling the role.

Langlands (2005) described a profession as an occupation normally entered through a degree followed by a period of further study or professional training. In this regard, the professional identity of careers advisers lacks definition as there is an absence of uniformity of entry qualifications; some careers advisers progress into work in higher education following acquisition of a DipCG/QCG and varying amounts of work experience, there are those who move into the role with experience in other sectors and then gain the AGCAS Diploma while working as a careers adviser, and there are others who are working as a careers adviser without a careers guidance qualification. This sits in sharp contrast with the concept of a profession as one where the members control access to practice, and where specialist knowledge can be more highly credentialed if linked to particular institutions where that knowledge can be gained (Collins, 1990). In one institution, which participated in the study, the respondents even within that one institution were a mix of those with and without a directly relevant qualification. This, perhaps, has similarities to changes to the probation service which have resulted in a range of qualification routes rather than one consistent pathway (Lindsay and Sandhu, 2014) which serves to undermine the value of the skill and knowledge deployed by those within the profession. In the case of careers advisers, the evidence suggests that some within careers services themselves doubt they possess the skill and knowledge required to fulfil the role; some of the respondents who started work as a careers adviser coming from a different professional background convey a sense from their new employers of ‘if you could do that, then you can do this’; a confidence that, as new careers advisers, they lacked.

The variation in entry to practice as a careers adviser across universities also points to a further lack of definition within their professional identity in the way Wilensky (1964) and Friedson (2001) defined a profession as a field of work where the practitioners, themselves, controlled the standard of admission to practice. That careers services in higher education do not appear to have taken steps to standardise across the sector suggests that an absence of definition within this area of work is deeply embedded. This may be a reflection of the diversity and individuality of institutions across the sector, but may also be because as a profession within the sector, careers advice is relatively young. As described earlier, the AGCAS Diploma, the profession's 'own' qualification is only 20 years old, while AGCAS itself was founded less than fifty years ago. It is interesting to compare this timescale with the Chartered Institute for Professional Development (CIPD) established in 1913, over a century ago, and which, 40 years into its existence, restricted access to the area of work known as Human Resources (HR) to being by examination only and in 2001 achieved chartered status (CIPD, 2015). Careers advisers have a less defined sense of being a professional within their professional identity, perhaps, because an 'official' professional identity for careers advisers in higher education has yet to be established. The absence of regulation and accountability around careers advice, in all sectors, adds to the distance between careers advisers and those professions which control admission to their practice.

A variation in training and experience at the point of entry also results in a lack of 'professional socialisation' (Hall, 2005), another defining element of professional identity. It is often through the process of training that practitioners develop a sense of a common purpose, shared values and a language that helps to define their practice. This, combined with autonomous working, a defining part of the role of a careers adviser and of a profession (Friedson, 2001), also leads to a more individualised professional identity. Rather than a defined profession, careers advisers individually, or in groups, are creating their own definitions of the profession depending on their background and their experience within the institution in which they work. This will also have implications for AGCAS as a professional association; the

diversity of forms of the 'founding' professional role will present challenges when aiming to offer a relevant resource and voice for careers advisers.

A paucity of definition at the point of entry and training to be a careers adviser has a profound impact on another fundamental professional attribute: the development and possession of defined specialist skills and knowledge. Many careers advisers experience professional isolation as they try and find out what they need to know and how they should be carrying out their responsibilities in the absence of strong induction programmes and support to undertake continuing professional development. As Frederick said *"Even when I started, I didn't actually know what I was doing"* which resonates with Morgan's experience: *"when I first started, I didn't know diddly-squat about anything."* Even those with a DipCG at the point at which they take up their first higher education role suggest that continuing professional development, particularly in the early stages of their higher education career is important for them to maintain their professional identity, with Grace reflecting that she "*pulled myself up through the difficult first year, basically*." This does not reflect a sense of "professional adulthood" which, it is suggested is important for working effectively in multi-professional teams (Laidler, 1991). This may further undermine a careers adviser's sense of feeling equipped and prepared for their role given that they will be expected to work alongside academic and other university colleagues from the outset. The knowledge and skills that careers advisers identify as important relate to relevant occupational sectors and employers and, for those with no previous qualifications, the conduct of in-depth guidance interviews. Even where candidates do have previous qualifications, there seems to have been a not-unreasonable assumption amongst those employing careers advisers that someone with a DipCG will be well-prepared to work in higher education when, in fact, the DipCG is not focused on work in universities.

Given that guidance is considered by practitioners themselves to be an important, if not the most important, professional activity that a careers adviser undertakes, then an absence, or a delay in training and support for those who feel they need it, fosters self-doubt and challenges a sense of professional definition at the early stages of practise as a careers adviser.

As the delivery of careers guidance draws upon personal qualities alongside professional skills, each careers adviser develops an individualised approach to guidance as their practice develops, supporting the suggestion by Bimrose and Dane (2007) that there is a need to develop guidance practice in higher education in line with new research, theory and thinking. This individualised approach further fragments a collective definition of the skill of a careers adviser and poses a particular challenge to those who start working as a careers adviser without a guidance qualification; they are presented with a multiplicity of personal models and approaches and encouraged to develop their own with what often feels like very limited support.

The possession and maintenance of specialist knowledge has been found to be important in establishing a collective professional identity (Beijard et al, 2004, Coldron 1999, Beck and Young ,2005), while it has also been observed that for careers advisers outside higher education there is not a sense of a defined body of knowledge (Neary and Hutchinson, 2009). Without the possession of specialist skills and knowledge, a careers adviser is further vulnerable to a sense that 'anyone could do this job' – by others and within themselves. Furthermore, the profusion of information on graduate jobs and careers available via the internet combined with underdeveloped guidance skills by careers advisers, risks a reversal of the "information asymmetry" described by Spada (2009). The student (client) could know more than a newly-established careers adviser about the careers that interest them and the careers advisers may not be equipped with the guidance skills to help the student through their decision-making process.

Even the title used by those in the role is without definition. 'Careers adviser' is not a protected job title and lacks an association with any one particular qualification or entry route. The title can be adopted by anyone who chooses to use it, including academics who have responsibility for careers within their department. In addition, higher education careers services themselves confuse the picture by conferring a range of titles on those carrying out the activities and responsibilities which are generally understood to be that of a careers adviser. Titles within this study alone include:-'careers adviser', 'head of postgraduate career development' and 'careers and employability

adviser'. This resonates with the challenge to identity that Early Years Practitioners face as a result of a range of job titles which disperse the focus of the role (Adams, 2008).

There are also experiential challenges in defining the role of the careers adviser; multi-professional teams can play an important part in helping members of a profession to define their role and expertise through the recognition and influence of the 'other' professions in the team (Payne 2006, Gaskell and Leadbetter, 2009). However, careers advisers do not easily gain professional recognition through their work with academic colleagues, perhaps reflecting the tendency to grade amongst academics (Becher and Trowler, 2001). Careers advisers' experience of such partnership working is to tolerate a real, or perceived, status differential even though they believe that there should be greater mutual respect and a sharing of esteem (Finn, 2008). Such multi-professional team working experiences do not help a careers adviser to define their role as they do not receive affirmation of their skills and knowledge from those whose role is fundamental to the institutions within which careers advisers work.

The lack of professional recognition and the impact of job title are discussed in further detail later in this chapter. It is helpful first to consider the extent to which careers advisers recognise the broader context in which they work.

6.2 Careers advisers as Parochial

The term 'Parochial' has been chosen to reflect the fact that careers advisers sometimes fail to, or choose not to, appreciate the entirety of the university environment, focussing instead on what affects, and is affected by, their particular role. This can be seen as a consequence of a poorly defined professional role which encourages careers advisers to be more inward looking and drawn to the perspective of the professional association, AGCAS rather than that of the institution in which they work.

Careers advisers place a strong emphasis on student interaction, typically undergraduate or taught postgraduate students, but this seems to be at the

expense of the recognition of broader institutional priorities and the full range of academic responsibilities. Careers advisers often feel that academics don't see student employability as an important enough issue, but as some have noted, this is not personal, but is instead a reflection of the competing priorities within the academic role.

Careers advisers prize interaction with students through lectures and seminars as a demonstration of their parity with academics and, by extension, representative of professional status and expertise. This, along with their experience of dealing with academics, has led to a careers adviser construct of the academic role which prioritises teaching over research and does not appear to recognise 'administration' in the form of taking on significant management or organisational responsibility within their department. While research is acknowledged within the academic role there is little evidence to demonstrate a full understanding of what is involved in being, and being recognised as, research-active. The careers adviser construct of being an academic does not align with the professional identity of academics which has traditionally focussed on research rather than teaching and learning and is an identity grounded in their disciplinary community as much as in the institution in which they work (Becher and Trowler 2001, Jawitz 2009, Archer 2008).

For an academic, undergraduate teaching is the activity that they do less of as their research and management responsibilities increase, and so is often undertaken most by the junior members of a department including PhD students. There may be a slight difference in emphasis in institutions where interaction with students is more highly valued, although research will still remain a feature of the academic role (Becher and Trowler, 2001). Rather than demonstrating parity, this sought-after teaching activity can, therefore , reinforce a sense of a lesser role as careers advisers align themselves with those who have the least influence in departments; junior academics and administrators who arrange careers sessions in departments. There is relatively little connection to the research agenda either through work with PhD students or researchers as a matter of course, or through the carrying out of research to develop an evidence-base for careers advisers' work. This

is significant as research activity is critical for actual, and perceived, academic success and the primary motivator for the majority of those in academic roles: a lack of connection with any form of research agenda will, therefore, lessen the perceived value of the work and role of careers advisers in the eyes of many academics. Anne's experience of increasing academic interest through a report on PhD career paths demonstrates the potential to influence academics through work with this group of students.

Limited work with PhD students also reduces the insight that careers advisers might have into academic career paths. This also means that the majority of academics, themselves, will be following their careers without having experienced or benefitted from careers advice. Their lack of direct experience reduces the likelihood that academics will act as strong advocates for the work of careers advisers, as to do so would involve promoting the benefits of a service, to students, that they haven't experienced themselves. This is important as many students may need persuasion to consider the benefits of careers advice as it is likely that they won't have experienced such benefits at school, due to the changes to careers provision described earlier.

The way in which careers advisers conceptualise their role also reflects an absence of recognition of the wider institutional environment. Careers advisers are reluctant to be seen as an expert, preferring terms such as 'facilitator' or to describe their role as 'generic'. A range of conceptualisations of a role resonates with studies in other professional areas (Van de Camp, 2009, Kitay and Wright, 2007). However alongside this, careers advisers also place differing value on the possession and development of specialist knowledge which for some is not a feature of their professional identity. This is at odds with the aim of academic endeavour which is to cultivate and generate a deep level of knowledge and understanding in one particular field. This will make it harder for careers advisers to use a common language and build shared agendas with academics, setting them further apart from academic colleagues but also from executive leaders within their institutions (Vice Chancellor, Pro-Vice Chancellors), who are typically drawn from the academic community.

Another increasingly important institutional agenda to which little connection seems to be routinely made is that of Business Engagement. When speaking about their role, all the respondents referred to academics, some to other student and professional services, but the business engagement function was barely mentioned. For institutions, strong links to industry are important for (funded) research collaborations, as well as for sources of student placements and graduate jobs. As graduate destinations become more important to institutions, academic departments will have an increased interest in links with organisations that can provide employment opportunities for students and business engagement units will be more aware of the potential to build relationships with organisations starting with their graduate recruitment activity. Where careers advisers consider this agenda to be aligned with their own, it presents both an opportunity, as it was for Brenda keen to work with the employer engagement colleague in the faculty of Law, but also a threat, as illustrated by Mathilda who felt vulnerable to being subsumed by the business and enterprise unit. This is despite the fact that in many institutions, careers services have links with a broader range of employers than an academic department or business engagement unit could hope to have and that there are many employers who are far more interested in student or graduate recruitment than a research partnership in the first instance. When interacting with colleagues across their university, careers advisers could therefore approach discussions about business engagement from a greater position of strength than they perhaps currently do.

The limited recognition, or parochialism, within the organisational environment is reinforced by the low levels of interest by careers advisers in managerial roles within their own service, which distances them from institutional politics, priorities and strategic issues. Many careers advisers feel protected from broader institutional issues by their head of service and even suggest that it is not their responsibility to be concerned by them. The approach careers advisers take limits their understanding of ways in which their work can be described, and positioned, as of most relevance to current priorities and approaches. This is a way in which they would gain most

recognition within their institution. The positioning of the careers adviser role, distanced from the broader context, seems to be embedded across the sector: careers advisers who were formerly in management roles and enjoyed the strategic element of their former role feel frustrated by the lack of engagement with broader issues. However, they accept that strategic and managerial perspectives do not form part of the careers adviser's role and are not expected from them by their head of service. This perspective and approach to the role resonates with the concept of a dynamic of professions .v. managers and particularly the idea that in the public sector, professionals have chosen not to take opportunities to assume or adopt managerial perspective and roles (Ackroyd, 1998).

The stance taken by careers advisers is far from the "management minded professionalism" advocated by Nordegraaf (2011) which would enable careers advisers to approach their responsibilities with active consideration of broader organisational issues following a process such as Creative Mediation (Knights and Gleeson, 2006) to deliver their services in a way that met both professional and strategic priorities. There were scant examples of careers advisers embracing management issues such as service planning as part of their role, unlike examples that have been cited in other professions, for example, accountancy and architecture (Cooper and Robson, 2006, Cohen, 2005).

A tendency to parochialism by careers advisers which distances them from their organisational environment has been discussed in this section. However, whilst failing to fully recognise the organisational context in which they work, careers advisers at the same time do not always receive the professional recognition that they seek. This sets up a mutually reinforcing dynamic, which shapes the self-understanding and experience of careers advisers in higher education. The absence of recognition that careers advisers experience is discussed in the next section.

6.3 Careers advisers as Unrecognised

The term ‘Unrecognised’ has been chosen to reflect the fact that careers advisers experience a lack of recognition from others of their purpose, skill and collective professional identity within their institutions. This is in contrast to the purpose and features of a profession as a group, which solves a generally understood problem and is recognised for doing so by their clients and employers, but also the public, who share a positive regard for their skills and knowledge (Langlands, 2005; Torstendahl 1990; Friedson, 2001). Within universities, in the current employability climate, the ‘client’ for a careers adviser can be seen as the student or the academic as representative of the school or faculty to which a ‘careers service’ is provided. The institution is the employer of careers advisers but can also be seen as a client for which graduate career destinations are an increasingly critical key performance indicator. There are instances where all these groups fail to fully recognise careers advisers as professionals. Where academics and professional service colleagues fail to recognise careers advisers as professionals, the experience of working alongside them has the potential to undermine, rather than reinforce a sense of professional identity (Molyneaux, 2001, Gaskell and Leadbetter, 2009).

Careers advisers are most frustrated by a paucity of understanding of their role by some academic colleagues. This compromises their practise, because it can mean that they do not gain access to students at the point at which they feel the students need the most help, as illustrated by Mathilda only having the opportunity to run CV sessions with students in their first year. Careers advisers’ practice is also compromised, because the academics often fail to see the value of their involvement with students and, therefore, do not facilitate or encourage it, as demonstrated by Sarah’s experience with academics running a vocational programme. This has a considerable impact, as academics have a powerful influence on student perceptions of, and engagement with, different elements of the university. Such influence comes through the frequency with which academics interact with students and academics’ position as subject experts. Given that engagement with a careers adviser is rarely compulsory within a university

setting (unless part of a taught module), the lack of recognition of careers advisers by academics can lead to a reduction in student engagement with careers advisers. This limits the impact that careers advisers can have through their work. This in turn feeds a failure to understand the purpose, skill and expertise of careers advisers by students which will perpetuate the academic perception. The most strikingly shocking, to me, example of the absence of academic recognition is Grace's own parents who are themselves academics and, according to her, do not understand or appear able to value their own daughter as a professional in relation to their own roles.

At an institutional level this non-recognition manifests itself in a number of ways. Where institutions see their careers services as significant to the delivery of the employability agenda, careers advisers feel more valued, for example Stephanie feeling like a kite propelled by a gust of wind, or Clare reflecting on a previous higher education place of work where she feels the service was more valued. The findings suggest that careers advisers have a critical view on the roles and services with which they are being aligned or placed 'beneath' and may or may not feel such comparisons are appropriate.

The respondents who won institutional or national awards provide examples of such positioning. They also show that when careers advisers have comparable achievements with academics and other parts of the university, it can be treated as less significant than a comparable award won by another part of the institution through categorisation or response. It is interesting to note that in two out of the three cases, the reluctance to recognise the achievement of the careers adviser came from fellow professional services rather than those involved in teaching and learning, which suggests that the grading in academic life (Becher and Trowler, 2001) has transferred across to professional services, who also construct hierarchies of practice and priority. This may also suggest that there are professional services who have accepted the notion that there is a status differential between themselves and academics and do not seek a broader distribution of esteem (Chattopadhyay et al,2010).

Of the award-winners, the most notable experience was Anne's winning of the national Times Higher award, where, not only the marketing and communications department, but even her own careers service failed to take the opportunity to recognise the success. This suggests that there might be a disconnect between the leadership of that service, the broader higher education landscape and the importance of positioning in the current climate, although it may relate to more personal views about the value of such awards. Set against that, however, is the impact that such a minimal response could have had on Anne, although she was able to separate her personal achievement ("*my equivalent of winning a BAFTA only in an obscure category*") from the institutional response and instead identify personal support she had received within her service. Nonetheless, in all cases, the experiences left the award-winners, whose excellence and professional skills had been recognised, feeling that their achievement was seen as 'lesser' in some way and that esteem between academics and careers advisers was not evenly distributed (Finn 2008).

Given these experiences, it is not surprising that careers advisers, themselves, struggle to value themselves as part of a profession and express a strong desire for 'kudos' and credibility. They often achieve this by privileging other experience and connections to more desirable groups, effectively disassociating themselves from being a careers adviser.

Previous experience is particularly valued and careers advisers use their former jobs and careers as a way of encouraging students, academics and employers to see what they have to offer. This is the case even when the experience is distant (in one, case thirty years ago) or one that was not enjoyed. There is a contradiction between the fact that careers advisers are doing a job they love, yet use previous roles that they chose to leave, in order to bolster their professional credibility.

The most desirable group association, particularly when dealing with students, is with employers or external providers, as they offer something of value to the students; greater insight into a company or sector and the prospect of a job. Careers advisers tend not to imply greater knowledge of

graduate opportunities as a result of their contacts, but feel that they gain credibility by positioning themselves as a route to employers. The implication here is that careers advisers do not believe themselves to offer anything of value other than a connection to people who do, even though the process of connection can be facilitated by many others, including the students themselves, particularly given the rise in the use of social media. So, by positioning themselves as a facilitator, careers advisers fail to foreground their own skill and purpose, thus colluding with students (and academics) as their detractors.

Careers advisers again miss an opportunity here to promote themselves as owners of specialist and distinct knowledge, one of the features of being a part of a profession (Dalli, 2008). This is particularly the case with courses such as Engineering and Business, where links with employers may already be strong, but where careers advisers' skills in supporting labour market information analysis, decision making and effective application techniques would add significant value to graduate career destinations. It was notable, that Emma spoke about the importance of associating herself with employers and about the challenge of making themselves 'visible' to students. This suggests that she had gained greater credibility for herself by associating herself with employers, but was rendering herself invisible as a careers adviser in the process.

Partnerships with academics are also highly valued. This relates to the issue of access to students described above, but there is, in addition to this, the appeal of being seen alongside the most influential role in the student education experience which increases a sense of shared esteem (Finn 2008). For Christina, delivering an employability module in partnership with an academic was the activity she had aspired to deliver as a careers adviser within higher education. There are practical benefits here in terms of engaging students and persuading them that careers and employability activity is important, yet at the same time, the message is given that a careers adviser is a role of value, because it is associated with an academic role, rather than having 'kudos' and validity in its own right.

Another area of ‘self-disassociation’ is in relation to job title and sphere of responsibility. Careers advisers feel some embarrassment, when using their job title outside the workplace, as it suggests a lack of expertise and the absence of a defined and respected role. At social occasions, Clare is reluctant to tell people what she does for a living while for Sam, using the term ‘University Careers Adviser’ has more appeal. Those who are promoted to a more senior role welcome a change in job title and the opportunity to use the term ‘Head of’ or ‘Director’, as it indicates greater status and, they feel, a clearer indication of what their work involves to those within and outside the workplace. This resonates with the experience of careers advisers working outside higher education, who feel that a self-explanatory job title increases their sense of being a professional (Neary, 2014). Management roles also involve greater contact with more senior colleagues who are another, more desirable, group with which to associate because of their status within the institution; something that Sam missed when he moved from being a head of service to being a careers adviser.

The issue of job title resonates with that of early years’ professionals, who feel that their job titles do not convey the most skilled element of their work (Adams, 2008). Adams also observed that job titles that include the term ‘childhood’ prompt a connection with children rather than the professionals who support child development. In the same way, the term ‘career’ in careers adviser might also prompt a connection in the mind of the public with those who are perceived to have successful careers, rather than those giving the advice. Given the lack of definition and understanding of the role, it could be that being a careers adviser is not seen as a career in itself. The job title may, therefore, itself be contributing to a lack of recognition of the role, placing the careers adviser as ‘lesser’ to the roles that the students that they advise wish to pursue, in a similar vein to the corruption of Aristotle’s words, now a commonly used phrase: “Those who can, do. Those who can’t, teach.” Such a view is borne out by the recent Oxbridge graduate receiving CV advice from a fellow alumnus working as a careers adviser and asking of them “what went wrong?”

Studies into individual and collective professional identity suggest that individual professional identity is interwoven with individual personal and political identities (Colley and James, 2005). The fact that using the job title 'careers adviser' outside work can feel uncomfortable suggests that the interplay between personal and professional identity mediated by membership of a professional group (Payne, 2006) is not always a positive experience for careers advisers. Payne's model was developed in the context of social workers receiving positive reinforcement from membership of multi-professional teams. However, if careers advisers are feeling unrecognised and institutionally disadvantaged in their professional life, the contribution that their professional identity makes to their personal identity could serve to undermine a sense of confidence and value. This could lead to a situation whereby the individuals that influence the professional group feel less confident and so, over time, the confidence of the professional group and individual professional identities diminishes. This is another example, as with being parochial, yet unrecognised, of a mutually reinforcing dynamic which shapes the self-understanding and experience of careers advisers in higher education.

In the next section of this chapter the factors that contribute to a, perhaps unsurprising, absence of professional confidence amongst careers advisers are discussed.

6.4 Careers advisers as Unconfident

With a lack of definition, an absence of recognition by others and a sense of parochialism, it is perhaps not surprising that the professional identity of careers advisers is reported as one that lacks confidence. Many careers advisers appear to begin their higher education career with a sense of uncertainty, feeling that they are 'making it up as they go along', do their very best and hope that their best is good enough. The mandate to carry out their work without a rigorous induction, limited continuing professional

development and, in some cases, without a qualification undermines a sense of professional confidence at a very early stage.

This is conveyed through a strong desire for 'kudos' and credibility (both unsolicited words used with notable frequency across the interviews) and also the use of diminutive language, when careers advisers are describing themselves. In addition to the quotations in the previous chapter, bringing together a number of comments illustrates a sense that careers advisers feel that they are in a lesser position than others around them. Grace talked about *"our own little office"* and, reducing things further, *"my own little part of the careers advisory room."* Ellie described the professional support forum within her institution thus; *"It's about people who provide student support, can come together, do little workshops with each other."* The use of the word 'little' in these contexts appears to represent 'unimportance'. The alignment with student support demonstrates the impact of institutional positioning. When careers advisers are placed in this category their sense of being a professional is diminished as they feel aligned with 'people who provide student support', rather than other professional groups.

A further source of low confidence is the comparison that careers advisers make between their own qualifications (usually a Bachelors degree) and that of their academic colleagues (usually a PhD). Some have considered taking a higher qualification and there are some who have taken additional vocational qualifications in order to boost their credibility with academics. As well as illustrating lower levels of confidence, these responses also provide another demonstration of an absence of understanding, by careers advisers, of their operating environment. A Masters level qualification will increase their level of qualification and will make careers advisers feel more confident, however for a research-focussed academic, taught Masters-level study which is not leading to PhD study could be seen in a similar category as an undergraduate degree. However, the positive impact of feeling more intellectually confident on the professional identity of careers advisers given that they work in an academic environment should not be underestimated. Those who feel intellectually confident, for example through possession of a PhD (Jonathan) or as a result of an Oxbridge education (Frances) , articulate

a greater belief in their professional identity; this might be because they feel they are amongst intellectual peers which provides a sense of belonging within an academic environment that the role of careers adviser does not.

Although not directly articulated in the study, the focus on work with students may also affect careers adviser confidence in the academic environment. As much as they value working with students, careers advisers have a desire to establish credibility and 'kudos' with them , drawing upon previous experience and employer contacts to convince or reassure them that they have enough knowledge and skill to be able to help them. Through working with students who are typically younger and have much less work experience than themselves careers advisers will be used to being in a position of 'authority' when carrying out key elements of their role, teaching, imparting information or offering advice and guidance. This could lead to careers advisers feeling less confident when having 'peer' discussions with academic colleagues who are accustomed to robust discussion and argument, leading in turn to even more challenging situations if, as discussed in section 6.2 of this chapter, careers advisers also choose not to, or do not feel able to, present themselves as experts in their field.

A lack of confidence within their role will further reinforce a sense that there is a lack of "professional adulthood" (Laidler, 1991) amongst careers advisers, which will undermine their ability to work effectively in partnership with other parts of their own service, with academics and with professional services colleagues as part of a multi-professional team. Multi-professional teams are sites through which professional identity can be affirmed, so a lack of confidence by careers advisers could lead to an unhelpful cycle, whereby they experience inter-professional teamwork with a greater tendency to conflict (Molyneaux, 2001) which will then contribute further to a reduction in confidence.

Although the description through the four sections above suggests a fragile professional identity vulnerable to mis-understanding, weak definition and an absence of confidence, careers advisers are driven by a strong sense of purpose. This dedication to their role is discussed in the next section.

6.5 Careers advisers as Dedicated

Although working with students was seems to contribute directly and indirectly to a lack of confidence amongst careers advisers, it was also what drives a love for what they do. Careers advisers feel very positive about their work and feel fortunate to be in their role, a *"lottery job"* (Anne) where *"students is what makes my day"* (Stephanie). The strength of feeling is based on a powerful commitment to the purpose of being a careers adviser which could be summarised as 'helping students'. Careers advisers report feeling rewarded and validated by knowing that they have made a positive difference to a student's career prospects and consistently identify it as the key motivator within their role. This is to the extent where the positive association with student engagement and impact outweighs the frustration of the lack of recognition and access to practise regularly experienced when dealing with academic colleagues. There are parallels here with the dedication within the nursing profession to patient care at the expense of their own status and profile (Gardner 1992, Fagermoen 1997, Mueller et al, 2008).

This commitment to working with students is so strong, that, despite their frustrations, careers advisers do not consider leaving the profession or changing roles. It could be argued that this is in part due to the lack of confidence described above, but it is also because in relation to the student focus, a managerial role has no appeal; careers advisers express little appetite for involvement with strategy and institutional politics and are happy to accept that that is not a part of their role, but the responsibility of the heads of careers service. However, some also wish to have more influence and impact and reflect on the fact that, because they are not interested in management responsibilities (the most common route to progression), they do not feel that they have opportunities to develop their career. This suggests that while the dedication to a student-focused role provides strong motivation to be a careers adviser, it might also lead to careers advisers limiting the scope of their responsibilities and influence within the

organisation. This does not align with the degree of autonomy and independence generally associated with professional roles (Friedson, 2001) or acknowledge the possibility that careers advisers could maintain or develop their influence by adopting management approaches within their work (Waring and Currie, 2009).

6.6 Careers advisers in summary

The professional identity of careers advisers can be summarised as an identity which lacks definition as a profession and does not recognise, and is not fully recognised by, the context in which it is situated. It is an identity which balances a low sense of confidence with a strong sense of dedication to the role. Having described this professional identity, drawn from the findings of this study, in the context of the relevant academic literature, the impact that careers advisers perceive the 'new' employability climate to have on their role is considered in the next section.

6.7 The response to the 'new' employability climate

The self-perception and self-understanding of careers advisers described above is reflected in the way that careers advisers viewed the prospect of a 'new' employability climate in 2012. The increase in institutional interest in careers and employability in England resulting from the rising status of the undergraduate student experience in line with tuition fee increases, confirms the extent to which university careers services are generally aligned with the undergraduate student rather than postgraduate students or research and business engagement activity.

Careers advisers recognise that this change in profile leads to more visibility and accountability, but, due to a lack of confidence, this is welcomed more with caution than as a positive development. Some respondents expressed practical concerns around their capacity to deliver given the current size of some services in relation to the student population; Sarah anticipated restricted student access to her careers service in response to greater institutional recognition for what they do. Alongside this there is concern, by some, that a greater awareness of their work may reveal weaknesses and

deficiencies, rather than a recognition of high-level professional practice; a sense of exposure with nowhere to hide (Duncan). This may reflect an element of the well-known phenomenon, “imposter syndrome”. In some cases, there is a sense that there are elements of careers advisers’ work – for example CV-checking - which could be done ‘by anyone’ and don’t require particular skills or expertise (Ellie). It could be argued that this fear has been borne out through the increase in roles such as the Employability Development Officer (Appendix 2) where the requirements to provide initial first-line information and advice, group presentations and workshops to students are ‘A’ levels or equivalent and previous customer service experience.

Proposed or actual institutional changes in response to the rising importance of employability demonstrate the extent to which the work of careers advisers and the broader careers service is understood and valued. Where new models of delivery for employability and careers support are being introduced, careers advisers fear, and in some cases are seeing, a duplication or replacement of their activities on the basis that current practice is not meeting the needs of the students or the institution. In cases where this is happening, the ‘new’ deliverers of careers and employability-related activities are not always careers advisers. This was Paul’s experience, where work placement officers were considered to be of greater relevance to the institutional employability agenda.

If careers advisers have been accustomed to gaining satisfaction and esteem by being part of a strong group (Lewis and Crisp, 2004),changes to their work as part of institutional employability developments may be perceived as a greater threat (Branscombe, 1999) which will increase their affiliation to their professional group. Where such changes take place, there is therefore the potential for careers advisers to become more inward- looking and defensive and to be drawn to the encapsulation and perspective of their professional association rather than their institution (Ackroyd, 2011). This will perpetuate the challenges within the professional identity of careers advisers but also the challenges for heads of service who may meet greater resistance to change. The development of new employability environments can be challenging

enough for heads of service so supporting careers advisers to develop a confident and capable professional identity will be important for careers service success. In the final section of this chapter, the implications of the professional identity of careers advisers for heads of careers service are examined in more detail.

6.8 Implications for Heads of Careers Services

In this section I draw upon the findings from this study and my understanding of the heads of service perspective through my personal experience.

Heads of careers services have responsibility for the leadership and management of careers advisers, who are traditionally seen as the core professional workforce within a service. However, a key objective for a head of careers service is to position their service as the professional hub for careers and employability expertise to senior managers, academics and students within their institution. Influence with academic departments is critical to heads of service, not only to facilitate access to students, but, also, because it is funding from academic departments which largely, if not exclusively, funds careers services.

A lack of a clearly defined professional identity within their core workforce presents a challenge to heads of service as it undermines a clear 'case' to support and invest in careers advisers, and by extension careers services, as the specialists in student employability. The variation and, in some cases, a complete absence of a directly relevant qualification suggests that this is a role that can be carried out by many others within an institution, as does the absence of rigorous and sector-wide requirements for continuing professional development.

The lack of recognition of careers advisers by students and academics could also have an unhelpful impact on heads of service. It suggests that a head of service's promotion of the skill, expertise and experience of careers advisers in the careers and employability field, will not resonate with the way that advisers are already seen within their institution. This will be compounded by a tendency to parochialism amongst careers advisers which can result in a

reluctance to identify themselves as experts, an affiliation with undergraduate teaching alone, and the development of alliances with less influential colleagues in academic departments. This could limit the impact that a head of service might have when attempting to influence or negotiate with a senior member of an academic department if careers and employability activity has been positioned to be of lower priority or status with little or no connection to the research or business engagement agenda. Where careers advisers have chosen to gain credibility through links to recruiters and opportunity providers rather than through their skills in career development and decision- making, a head of service may find it difficult to persuade an academic leader that careers advisers add value to the career development of their students. This will particularly be the case for disciplines where departmental staff are already strongly connected to industrial partners for placement and research activity.

Careers services are small departments in relation to the size of their institutions. In this context, careers advisers can play an important role by representing their careers service to key decision-makers as part of their role: it increases the opportunities for the service to gain profile and support across the institution and to be recognised as the professional hub for employability and career development support. However, the lack of confidence that careers advisers feel, combined with a lack of interest in wider institutional issues will present a challenge for heads of service, as it limits overall service capacity for institutional influence through day-to-day working and interaction, particularly with academic departments.

Where the professional identity of careers advisers presents an opportunity for heads of service is in their enthusiasm for their work and their commitment to helping students to develop their careers. These powerful motivators are strong assets for heads of careers service. They suggest that careers advisers can be supported in the development of their professional identity to meet the challenges outlined here, if the outcomes are clearly shown to have a positive impact on career development support for students and the security of the careers service within the institution. This resonates with the approach to the leadership of professionals outlined by Broadbent et

al (1997) where heads of service might realise organisational imperatives by:- (1) accommodating professional autonomy while striving for strategic control; (2) supporting the development of professional identity alongside organisational identity and (3) respecting established professional practice rather than focusing only on change to support organisational ambitions In the next chapter recommendations are made to support this approach to the roles of heads of service.

Chapter 7 Recommendations

This chapter contains recommendations of several sorts for heads of service and careers advisers which seek to address the challenges for heads of careers services outlined in the previous chapter. It concludes with indicative intentions for further research which will add to the understanding of the experience of careers advisers in higher education and develop a broader understanding of heads of service and careers services across the sector.

Development of the careers adviser role within the context of their institution, in a way that resonates with academic values and structures and enhances effective working relationships across the institution will enable careers advisers to develop a more confident and institutionally-aligned professional identity. This will benefit students and their potential employers, academics and the institution while positioning careers advisers to fulfil their commitment to their work with greater impact and influence. These recommendations are made while recognising that these practises currently occur to varying degrees within services in higher education. It is hoped that outlining them here will support heads of service in reflecting on their practise and services and to consider developments where they feel it is appropriate.

These recommendations are made in the context of the purpose of the DBA which is to make a contribution to management knowledge. However, in this case, it is important to acknowledge the role that careers advisers themselves should have in the implementation of these recommendations. As autonomous professionals, careers advisers are in a position to influence the development of their work and their professional identity when their organisational environment enables them to do so.

7.1 Enabling careers advisers to understand their role in the institutional context

The recommendation is that careers advisers will be most effective when they understand the broader structure, culture and priorities within their

institution and the positioning of their role within that context. There are three areas of understanding which it may be helpful to consider:

a. The institution

When careers advisers understand their institution as an organisation it helps them to place the institutional response to employability in context. This includes the role that undergraduate and postgraduate teaching income plays (including subject variation), the value of research income and the financial impact of business engagement and knowledge transfer activity. Understanding these issues will address the parochialism which might otherwise occur if attention is focused on the undergraduate student experience at the expense of all other aspects of the institution.

An understanding of the position of their institution in relation to comparator institutions and the wider sector will also be helpful. Alongside the debates about the value and validity of league tables, it will also help careers advisers if they routinely maintain awareness of institutional and relevant subject-level league table positions, particularly as Graduate Prospects appears as a key metric. Such awareness will equip careers advisers to find common ground with colleagues across the institution and to present their work in the context of institutional challenges and aspirations.

b. The academic role

A clear understanding of the academic role will helpfully shape the professional identity of careers advisers due to the way in which careers advisers compare themselves to academics and the influence that academics can have on careers advisers' access to students and on student perceptions of advisers. The institutional understanding described above will help careers advisers to understand how an academic colleague might be prioritising their teaching, research and

administrative responsibilities and who they need to work with and how, in order to maximise their influence and impact.

It will also be helpful for careers advisers to have a full understanding of the academic role; what it involves to undertake individual and collaborative research to maintain a reputation within the field of expertise, institutional expectations of research output and income generation, the process of being published and the nature of teaching and particularly “administrative” roles (which would be considered management and leadership roles in a professional services context). Such understanding will help careers advisers to tailor conversations to resonate with academic priorities, building relationships which are most sensitive to the full range of academic duties and therefore most likely to be productive. It will help careers advisers to present their own role in a way in which academics are more likely to engage as they can see the relevance to their own priorities. This will enable good working relationships with influential academics, as well as the ‘junior’ academics at an earlier stage in their career, which many careers advisers find easier to work with. The combination of both types of relationship will provide the most helpful context for careers advisers to fulfil their roles within their institutions as it will broaden their influence.

c. The careers service

As well as understanding the institution and the work of an academic, it will be helpful for careers advisers to understand their own careers service as a ‘business unit’, which is how it will be seen by those managing the university through an organisational lens. Accepting that many careers advisers are not interested in this aspect of their institution, it is still professionally relevant for them to understand how their service is funded and managed along with an insight into the management pressures that their head of service might be facing. This will provide opportunities for organized professionalism and creative mediation where careers advisers can develop their practise

in ways that balance professional and organisational priorities and support the careers service more broadly.

7.2 Defining the role to embed it within higher education so that a careers adviser is seen as a 'graduate careers specialist' rather than a 'careers adviser in higher education'.

Rather than see careers advisers as members of a profession who are fulfilling their role within higher education, a more coherent professional identity could be developed by conceptualising the role so that it resonates more strongly with the culture and practices within higher education. This will in part be addressed by the developed understanding outlined above. However in order to encourage academics and professional service colleagues to see the role of careers adviser as one of value, it is also recommended that heads of service and careers advisers work together to frame the role in terms that the academic community and the university more widely will recognise. This could be achieved by:-

a) Defining, creating and building a body of expertise and knowledge that careers advisers can claim as their own which builds upon their deep and often unarticulated understanding of the issues surrounding student employability. This will support a greater definition within careers advisers' professional identity. The expertise and knowledge is likely to include the skills associated with careers guidance and careers education, alongside employer and graduate labour market knowledge in a particular industry sector or sectors. It is also likely to include an understanding of how students within that particular institution need to be supported and developed in order to achieve success when engaging with the graduate market. Careers advisers should be encouraged to articulate these skills and knowledge as the basis of their role in a way that resonates with the academic approach of developing knowledge and understanding within a particular discipline. This can then provide a basis for conversation that will increase academics' understanding of the value of careers advisers to

their students and the way in which a careers adviser is distinct from other roles within the institution and certainly within an academic department.

b) Encouraging an evidence-based approach to practice to support the body of expertise and knowledge outlined above. This will support a greater recognition of careers advisers as a professional group with a distinct body of knowledge. Engagement with research activity and the use of data to inform activity will add greater credibility to discussions with academics. Involvement in regional and national collaborative activity to develop collective professional knowledge, for example through AGCAS Task Groups, will also support the positioning of the role as many academic colleagues collaborate in order to contribute to broader developments within their specialist field.

c) Recognising and formalising areas of practise which can complement or be complemented by other institutional priorities, for example, student recruitment, alumni relations, widening participation, international engagement and business engagement. This will enable careers advisers to contribute to a broader range of activities across the institution which will increase the recognition of their role, broaden their contribution to the wider institution and potentially develop their confidence. Closer to traditional activity, if careers advisers work with research students and, potentially, post-doctoral researchers (accepting the limitation of resources), they will gain a greater insight into academic careers and also increase the number of academics who have benefitted from careers advice themselves (thus making them more likely to refer students to the careers service). The activities described in this section might helpfully replace a focus on undergraduate teaching which has developed in part through perceived gains to status which could be said to arise from a misunderstanding of the status that academics place on undergraduate teaching.

d) Working to describe careers advisers' work in terms which are more commonly understood and valued by key stakeholders. For careers advisers, support in effective decision-making is considered the differentiating activity when compared with other roles within careers services. However, for stakeholders, and particularly students it is accepted across the sector that it is not decision-making support, but access to jobs and help with applications which often draws them to engage with a careers service. The most important term to consider when describing the work or value of a careers adviser is "guidance" which is seen by many careers advisers as the key distinctive skill which they deploy. Amongst careers advisers, giving guidance is considered a more in-depth and complex process than that of giving advice as guidance helps a client to consider their own needs and make career decisions that are right for them. 'Advice' in a careers advice setting is a process of providing information on particular routes and options in response to an individual's stated needs.

However it is worth noting that the introduction of new regulations for access to individual pension funds has highlighted a different public understanding of these terms. In the context of making decisions about pensions, 'guidance' is provided free of charge in order to inform people about the options open to them and expectations are being set that a recipient of guidance will not leave with any recommendations about the decisions that they could or should make. By contrast, 'advice' is something which is paid for, regulated and promises to recommend specific products that will best suit individual circumstances (Citizens Advice Bureau, 2015). This suggests that a public understanding of the terms guidance and advice may differ from that of careers advisers placing greater value on advice and guidance. Revisiting the way in which the careers adviser role is described to stakeholders, using different terms where contextually appropriate, will help to advance the broader understanding and appreciation of their work.

7.3 Creating a professional development framework

The recommendations outlined above could be incorporated and addressed through a clear framework for development for careers advisers working in higher education. This will help to create a cohesive professional identity amongst careers advisers within the institution which is not purely self-generated but is influenced by both an institutional and service context. Such a framework could include the following:-

A. An induction programme for new careers advisers to enable them to understand and carry out their role. It would be important to help those from other professional backgrounds to understand how their transferrable experience can be applied to the role and to understand their development needs, particularly in relation to giving one-to-one advice and guidance. It would also be helpful to avoid the assumption that qualified and experienced careers advisers moving into higher education have relevant graduate labour market insights and to provide support as they develop such knowledge.

B. An induction programme would also provide the opportunity to develop the institutional understanding outlined above by including an introduction to University as an organisation, the models of income and external market pressures, explaining the academic role and the place of undergraduate teaching, the importance of research and business engagement agendas and institutionally relevant graduate career destinations and key recruiters.

C. Encouragement for careers advisers to develop their professional identity through structured Continuing Professional Development (CPD) where the time required for participation is acknowledged and built into working expectations. This will set and reinforce an institutional standard for professional knowledge and skills. It would support the strong commitment

that careers advisers have to helping students while dealing with the other elements of their professional identity which pose a challenge. Such CPD could include:-

- **Peer review** i.e. careers advisers observing and providing feedback on guidance interviews and other core professional activities. This is already a well-established practice within many careers services as it enables the continuing development of one-to-one advice and guidance skills. Where careers advisers are newer to this area of work or to the higher education sector this will be particularly helpful in building expertise and confidence in their practise.

- **Contact and work-shadowing** with the organisations that recruit graduates from the institution. This will help careers advisers to have an up-to-date insight into likely career paths and opportunities available to their students which can be incorporated into their own body of knowledge. By embedding such activity into the role, links to employers will become a facet of careers adviser expertise rather than a source of credibility by disassociation with being a careers adviser and association with 'the other'. This approach will strengthen the quality of support that they can give to students preparing to enter the graduate job market which will increase their professional impact and therefore their confidence. It will also encourage careers advisers to see their current professional identity as a source of credibility, particularly when dealing with academic colleagues, rather than drawing upon previous and other experiences to achieve this.

- **Development of Labour Market knowledge** in the form of a current understanding of graduate labour market trends and industry trends within the sectors of relevance to them. This will equip careers advisers with data to support and promote an evidence-based approach to their work.

- **Practitioner research** will strengthen the research base amongst careers advisers, helping to address the parochialism and lack of recognition which shapes their self-identity; the experience of undertaking Masters-level study, and beyond, would also give careers advisers a greater appreciation of the research process while the higher qualification would support greater recognition of their role by others within the institution. Such work would also strengthen the definition of the careers adviser role in terms of expertise, while the under-confidence that careers advisers feel when comparing their qualifications to that of their academic colleagues would be lessened. Careers advisers should be encouraged to develop the body of knowledge around career theory and its application in higher education which is an under-researched area, as much as practise-related research. This would broaden academic interest in their work and potentially increase careers advisers' sense of credibility in their area of work.

- **Understanding the institutional context** will help careers advisers effectively to define their roles in a way that will increase their recognition within the institution. Updates on institutional developments should form, and be seen as, part of a careers adviser's CPD. This can then be supported by training in the two skill areas outlined below in

the two points below, in order to enable careers advisers to act on their institutional understanding.

- **Training in influencing, problem-solving and negotiation** to support interactions with decision-makers within the academic community, thus addressing the lack of recognition and parochialism discussed earlier. Skill development in this area can build on existing advice and guidance expertise. Equipping careers advisers with these skills will help to extend the influence of the head of service across the institution. It may also help to develop a stronger sense of professional identity between careers advisers within an institution as it contributes to their sense of professional socialisation.

- **Project management skills** will support careers advisers to approach their work in ways that balance professional imperatives with organisational priorities and the need for evidence of outcomes where appropriate. This will also give careers advisers a greater insight into leadership and management within their service which would increase their self-confidence as they developed a greater understanding of the broader institutional picture. By seeing a fuller picture, it might also change careers advisers' perspectives on leadership and management roles as part of their own career journey and provide heads of service with opportunities to give careers advisers more service-wide responsibilities within the service beyond their student-focussed responsibilities.

7.4 Leadership Approaches

Leadership and management approaches that conceptualise the careers adviser role as institutionally relevant will augment the influence of the careers service as careers advisers will be empowered to adopt a strategic perspective, and make informed contributions to student employability debates. By doing so, the issue of under-confidence amongst careers advisers can also be addressed. The autonomous nature of the careers adviser role and the broader culture across higher education suggests that facilitative, rather than directive, leadership approaches are more appropriate.

Some examples of approaches which might help to facilitate greater impact and effectiveness amongst careers advisers are:

a) Using opportunities across the institution to promote the understanding of issues faced and met by careers advisers such as the competitive capability of students within the institution. This will move understanding of the role away from 'this is what they do' and the activity and delivery, to 'this is the problem that they solve'. Presenting careers advisers as a group of people who solve problems aligns them much more with other professional groups including academic colleagues.

b) Regular sharing of information about institutional and national trends and developments which are relevant to the work of careers advisers. This can be practically difficult to do but as a result, careers advisers – and all careers service staff – will feel more connected to the broader agenda and will be better able to develop approaches to their work which are aligned with the careers service and the institution.

c) Modelling and having open discussion with careers advisers about the behaviours that will support effective peer-to-peer relationship building. This will help them to increase their impact when working

with academic departments and colleagues in professional services. Heads of service spend at least as much time with peers and with senior university figures as with students so have more experience of deploying their influencing and negotiating skills and, where they come from that background, adapting their guidance skills to have an impact. By sharing their experience and strategies with them, careers advisers will be able to reflect upon and strengthen their own approaches, building on their student engagement skills. This will develop confidence and capacity a way that demonstrates recognition of the institutional environment, therefore gaining more recognition for careers advisers themselves. This could also encourage careers advisers to present themselves as 'institutional problem solvers', as discussed in section (a), which will help them to develop partnerships across the institution.

d) Working with immediate managers of careers advisers – often deputy heads or assistant directors of services– in order to share and promote these approaches will develop and empower managers of careers advisers in order to develop overall service capacity. The development of their leadership and management skills could be supported through a combination of day-to-day working supported by contextualised training, such as the newly established AGCAS management course,

7.5 Collaborating with colleagues across the sector to promote a strong external understanding of Careers Advisers in Higher Education as a professional group

The recommendations above focus on developing the professional identity of careers advisers in higher education within their own institutions. As other professional groups demonstrate, the way to establish a clear professional identity is by defining a set of skills and knowledge which are deployed by a

group of people who, through a distinctive training and qualification path, can solve a recognised problem.

The current professional identity of careers advisers in higher education suggests that a collective approach is required to strengthen their position across the sector. This is increasingly important as the institutional response to the employability agenda has varied, with careers services being conceptualised to a lesser or greater degree as either the problem behind institutional employability approaches or the solution to improving them.

Working through AGCAS is an obvious route as all higher education career services are member organisations. However, as has already been discussed, AGCAS is an association of careers services NOT careers advisers and AGCAS now refers to 'Careers Professionals' not careers advisers. Heads of service may need to consider whether they seek to position the careers adviser role differently from other colleagues within their service and if so, how they do that. It could be argued that the nature of the careers adviser role is sufficiently distinct in its experience, depth of knowledge and student interaction to warrant such positioning. It may also be possible that careers advisers provide the clearest demonstration that a university careers service makes a contribution to student employability, which cannot be replicated elsewhere in the institution through other student support or administrative roles. This will be more likely if the role is configured to have greater resonance with institutional priorities and the academic role.

The risk of not taking this approach is that careers services could appear to be a collection of administrators who have developed specialist knowledge as opposed to a professional service shaped by expertise deployed by qualified professionals which enables an institution to maintain its income and status. The former perception could render the careers service vulnerable to institutional re-organisations in the name of efficiency.

A professional register of higher education careers advisers with 'chartered status' supported by AGCAS would convey the expertise and value that careers advisers bring to student employability. It would also demonstrate an

element of ‘protection’ which other professions exercise by controlling access to practice, in order to maintain their position in society as chartered status would require certain levels of qualification or experience. Such a step will provide an important framework within which careers advisers can maintain or re-establish their position as a profession. This will be important in order to build future generations of careers advisers as the flow into the sector of those who developed their careers through the LEA pathway in England has now ended.

Higher education must learn from the Connexions experience where, fifteen years later, an absence of high quality impartial careers information, advice and guidance is recognised as having a limiting effect on the career understanding and potential of young people in schools. Were compulsory careers information, advice and guidance to be re-introduced, an established profession of careers advisers outside higher education to deliver this no longer exists. The current interest in employability across the higher education sector provides an opportunity to reinforce the position of careers advisers and their expertise collectively and within their own institution. The sector is increasingly diverse and challenged, but strengthening the professional identity of careers advisers will increase the opportunity for students at all institutions to realise their potential through the transformative nature of higher education. Careers advisers themselves say that this is what motivates them most in their work and their motivation is a powerful force which is there to be harnessed in the interests of the individual student, higher education and society as a whole.

Having outlined recommendations for heads of service and careers advisers, the next section of this chapter outlines suggestions for further research.

7.6 Further Research

There are a number of papers which I feel can be developed as a result of this work. In addition, this study has identified a number of areas where I now wish to develop a further understanding of the experience and self-understanding of careers advisers in higher education as well as of heads of

careers service. A deeper understanding in these areas will shape ideas and approaches which could strengthen the effectiveness and impact of careers services across the sector. There are opportunities for further interpretation of existing data and opportunities for new research in related areas with the respondents to this study or with new participants which are outlined here.

a. Further interpretation of existing data

There is potential for additional research based on the data already gathered which would fall within the ethical framework for this study and the consent given by participants. Each interview transcript forms a personal career narrative which, in addition to the analysis which led to the emergence of themes for this study could be analysed to offer deeper insight into personal journeys within the higher education sector at a time of (proposed) change. The data could also be re-interpreted with a particular emphasis on the language used by participants, suggesting a story of a Cinderella profession waiting to be discovered, feeling 'little' and, even when award-winning, not given the recognition they deserve, or a story of untapped potential.

b. Further work with participants

A number of research interviews were conducted with participants already known to me. Through this and through correspondence surrounding the interviews, I therefore now have a professional connection to a number of careers advisers across the sector. This offers the potential for follow-up discussions about the themes that were identified; a number of respondents expressed an interest in the outcomes of the research and offered their availability to discuss their thoughts on the findings.

Further interviews would also provide the opportunity to understand, longitudinally, the impact of institutional responses to the employability agenda on careers advisers. This study was conducted in summer 2012, just before higher fees were introduced where early models of delivery, anticipating changes in student behaviour and greater institutional interest, were in place. A follow-up interview, now that the first generation of £9,000 fee-paying undergraduates in England have completed their courses offers a

meaningful time point at which to explore any institutional changes that the respondents have experienced, and the impact on their professional identity.

The participants in this study may also be open to (a) further interview (s) to explore the interplay between their personal and professional identity. This would add an interesting perspective to the professional identity construction of careers advisers. The study participants would be an appropriate target sample for such work, as I am already in contact with them. This might encourage them to participate, although it would be important for study design to ensure that the existing relationship added value without undermining the authenticity of the research. It would also be important to take ethical approaches that protect the respondents given that they and I work in the same sector.

c. Related Areas for further investigation

i. Careers Advisers

There were references to aspects of the professional identity of careers advisers which did not emerge as strong themes, but could be explored further. The issue of gender was raised in two interviews where respondents were balancing caring for young families with part-time work to maintain their career. There tend to be more female than male careers advisers in university careers services and so an investigation into professional identity through an understanding of female careers adviser histories may provide some insights into the identity of the profession. The responses of those with a PhD and the Oxbridge-educated respondent also suggest that personal capital accrued separately from the role has an impact on the professional identity of careers advisers. It would be interesting to explore the relationship between perceived personal and professional capital and how that might have an impact on professional identity as a careers adviser.

ii. Heads of Careers Service

Having explored the professional identity of careers advisers, a complementary study into the identity and experience of heads of careers service would add depth to the understanding of the professional challenges facing higher education careers services in the current employability climate. It would also provide an opportunity to obtain a head of service perspective on the recommendations made in this study. A separate sample of former heads of careers service, who are now working as careers advisers, would also provide a valuable insight into the similarities and contrasts between the two roles and the challenges faced by heads of service. There was one such respondent in this study and I am aware of others currently working within the sector. The findings of work in this area could inform the design and development of training courses for careers service leaders and managers.

iii. Higher Education Careers Services

Reflecting on my experience of leading a careers service and my further developed understanding of the professional identity of careers advisers, I feel that Ackroyd (1996)'s theory of professional encapsulation and Whitchurch (2008)'s third space professional typology, could be usefully explored further in the context of higher education careers services. Further research using these concepts, which were identified as part of the academic context of this study, could provide an insight into the impact that service structures and institutional position have on the role and professional identity of careers advisers and the ways in which careers services are being structured and positioned to respond to their institutional employability agenda.

1. Models of encapsulation

The findings in this study suggested that, for some careers advisers the way in which they felt they were positioned both within their service and across the university had an impact on their professional identity. Ackroyd (1998) suggested that professionals within an organisation are twice encapsulated;

once by their professional association and once by associated professionals within the organisation and the leaders and managers of that organisation. It would be interesting to explore this model with careers advisers and heads of careers to see how it might apply and to consider further iterations of the theory – for example a third encapsulation which reflected the positioning of careers advisers within the careers service itself. Some preliminary work on this 'third encapsulation' module was conducted during the preparation of this thesis and the 'work-in-progress' result is included in Appendix 14

2. The typology of third space professionals

Participant accounts of their professional identity and experience suggest that there are differences in the way in which careers advisers perceive and enact their professional responsibilities within the context of their institution. Whitchurch (2008) suggested that the work of third space professionals can be classified into four groups: Bounded, Un-Bounded, Cross-Boundary and Blended professionals. These concepts could be explored with careers advisers and heads of service to identify and describe the different approaches that careers advisers now take to their roles, and the influence that institutional agendas have on those approaches.

These two areas of research may also identify other careers service models and alternative ways of conceptualising the role of careers adviser which are developing in the post-Browne employability climate. These areas also provide an opportunity to explore careers services in the context of organizational identity theory which could provide further insights into the professional identity of careers advisers.

Having outlined potential areas of further research to follow this study, the next section contains my reflections as a result of undertaking this piece of research.

Chapter 8. Reflections

Following the principles of qualitative research and the method of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), the findings from this study reflect the lived experience of the respondents while the recommendations are based on the phenomenon of the professional identity of careers advisers derived from the respondents' experience. However, as outlined in chapter 3, the motivation for conducting this investigation arises from a personal interest which I have developed over a 17 year career in higher education within and with university careers services. Throughout the study, I have experienced personal learning and have had my own views and perspective on the thoughts and feelings articulated by respondents and by those with whom I have held initial discussions about the findings. I have noted my thoughts in a reflective journal while conducting this research. Following the IPA method (Smith et al, 2009), my key reflections on the study are articulated here.

8.1 Reflections on the Method

I feel that I chose an appropriate approach and sample for this study. As an initial investigation into the professional identity of careers advisers in higher education, it has been helpful to visit a range of careers services in terms of size, scope, institutional profile and institutional position. I was surprised by the commonality of experience and articulation given the diversity of the sample and feel that the findings are more compelling as a result. The potential relevance of the recommendations to heads of service and careers advisers across the sector are also greater as a result.

Although it felt as if there was so much that could be explored, I feel that it was right to focus this thesis on developing an understanding the experience of careers advisers. As outlined in the Further Research section above, there is now potential to explore models of encapsulation and the ways in which careers advisers might approach their work in line with Whitchurch's (2008) behaviours of 'third space professionals'. However, to investigate these without having established an understanding of the often extensive experience of being a careers adviser would have limited the relevance and

authenticity of any findings; my concern would be that responses may have reflected the lack of confidence and a lack of recognition of the broader university environment which have emerged as features of the professional identity of careers advisers.

I have, still, however, experienced valuable personal learning as a result of undertaking this study. The process of data collection by interviewing careers advisers in a research context and visiting 13 of the 14 institutions in the study has given me a far deeper understanding of the breadth of careers service and careers adviser activity across the sector and a renewed awareness of the range of premises that careers services occupy in terms of size, physical positioning and environment. That may sound very prosaic, but as a representation of the institutional position and influence of the careers service, it could be considered to have an impact on professional identity. I have also experienced personal learning when considering my findings and this is outlined below.

8.2 Reflections on the Findings

I feel that the findings have provided a platform from which to develop further research into the professional identity and experience of careers advisers in higher education. I am satisfied that this study has achieved more than providing evidence for, or confirming, my previous understanding of the experience of working as a careers adviser and that I have developed my insights as a result.

A key area of learning has been in relation to the challenges of moving into work as a careers adviser in higher education. Before conducting this research, I had always considered the DipCG/QCG followed by experience of working as a careers adviser to be sufficient preparation. To my surprise, I have learnt that this is not necessarily the case. This study has helped me to see how difficult it is for a careers adviser to gain directly relevant knowledge and experience before entering the sector particularly in relation to understanding the graduate opportunity structure, supporting students through application processes and understanding the higher education environment.

I approached this study knowing that I wanted to understand the professional identity of careers advisers, but with some confidence that we would take a common view of the higher education context in which we work. This work has highlighted to me the extent to which many careers advisers have created their 'own world' and how much that differs from some heads of service by identifying with the student so much more than the institution which employs them. An alternative perspective on the strong student identification from a head of service on the AGCAS Management Course (see below) was that the careers advisers' commitment to impartiality and any LEA experience of being employed independently of any particular school or college, may mean that they feel more comfortable aligning themselves with the 'neutral' student. This has resonance with my understanding of careers advisers and the value they place on being able to provide client-centred guidance which is not influenced by the interests of any particular opportunity provider.

The 'world view' of careers advisers perhaps provides some explanation as to why I have heard a number of heads of service complaining that their careers advisers 'don't get it' and not understanding careers advisers' approaches to their work. I gained greater insight into the perspectives of heads of service when presenting my work to them and this is discussed next.

8.3 Reflections on Sharing the Findings

I have had two opportunities to share my initial findings and recommendations with heads of service; the AGCAS Heads of Service conference in January 2013 and a session at the AGCAS management training course in September 2014. I was very nervous in January 2013 as it was the first time I had shared anything beyond discussions with my supervisor and I was not sure how heads of service would receive what I had to say. I learnt from the experience that my description of the careers adviser experience was one that heads of service accepted and seemed to recognise in many ways. However, in the plenary session some heads of service claimed to have experienced careers advisers behaving badly towards other

members of staff within the careers service which resulted in an apparent lack of sympathy towards the embryonic recommendations from this study which I was presenting to them. I realised that if heads of service are experiencing and having to manage such situations, they may well have less time and interest in considering the careers adviser experience and developing approaches to support them in their work and professional confidence. This has the potential to widen what seemed to me to be a significant gap between heads of service and careers advisers.

At the same time, I sometimes had to remind myself that I was speaking to colleagues in a service management role. The most surprising sentiment was that they did not see why they should try to be like academics and shape the careers adviser role to resonate with the academic experience. It feels obvious to me that academic endeavour is the 'core business' of a university and therefore professional services should align and approach their work in ways that resonate with that. It would appear that that is not a universally shared view. Based on my experience and knowledge in the sector, I can see why heads of service may feel that way; in a small service they may be a practitioner/ manager, experiencing or having experienced the same challenges that careers advisers face when dealing with academics. They may also feel at a disadvantage when dealing with the academic community depending on how their institution views, and has positioned, the careers service.

This was a very valuable experience for me as I learnt the importance of disseminating my research carefully by making it clear that I am not trying to defend careers advisers, but to understand them in order to achieve more effective management, leadership and careers service impact. When I re-presented my findings in September 2014 participants were very engaged and again, seemed to recognise the professional identity of careers advisers which I presented to them. However, taking care to present my findings as an opportunity to offer insight set the context for a very constructive discussion about ways in which to work with and manage careers advisers effectively, based on my recommendations. I also gained further insights from the audience. It was in this session that a head of service suggested

that careers advisers may choose to feel distant from institutional agendas due to their strong commitment to the principle of impartiality. This observation provided helpful illumination on that particular dimension of careers advisers' professional identity.

8.4 Reflections on Personal and Professional Development

I undertook the DBA in order to further my professional development and broaden my career prospects. The personal value of undertaking this study is outlined in this section. A key reason for undertaking the DBA was so that I could develop my skills in 'academic thinking'; I was aware of my ability to work very effectively at an operational level, but would not have described myself as a strategic thinker. Six years after commencing the DBA programme, I feel that I have developed my capacity to think with precision and my ability to see connections and relationships between factors which I might previously have only achieved with prompting. At the beginning of this process, I had not fully appreciated the importance of clear and accurate problem definition as a facet of academic endeavour. However, I now recognise that this is a skill that I have developed through the research process, alongside the ability to prioritise information, avoid duplication and express issues with clarity in written communication.

I feel that my career development during the period that I have been undertaking this study provides some evidence for the development of my skills while undertaking the DBA. Since taking up the post at Nottingham, I feel that my research-enhanced skills have enabled me to achieve success in the leadership of the careers and employability service. I have led a recently expanded service comprising 15 teams who initially were working alongside and sometimes in competition with each other and within less than two years taken significant steps to align our activities. I have achieved this by observing service activity and understanding the thinking behind that, noting the impact on stakeholders and identifying, with key colleagues, the critical factors to be addressed in order to achieve service outcomes. This is effectively a response to a problem through a process of data collection (both

qualitative and quantitative) and analysis resulting in findings which form the basis for recommendations.

The timing of my career change has also enabled me to pilot some of the recommendations resulting from this study although I have been careful to ensure that my current role has not influenced this work. I have avoided the introduction of a stream of participant research by implementing ideas but not requesting feedback that might shape the recommendations included in this piece of work. I determined the recommendations before I took up this post and have been careful to link the recommendations directly to findings from the study and not my recent personal experience.

However, I *am* comfortable that my research has influenced my current role; some of the approaches I have adopted to develop the careers and employability service have tested some aspects of the recommendations in this study. For example, what started out as an initial monthly update to establish a connection to my 66 new colleagues across the 3 UK campuses so that they could get to know me and understand my role, has now developed into a core element of my leadership approach. I use the monthly update to connect colleagues to broader institutional, graduate market and sector developments to share my views on how we should approach service development. I still occasionally directly and indirectly solicit informal feedback and although it can feel uncomfortable to send, this approach is well received.

Another example is a course that I developed with an experienced and qualified project management trainer; 'Applying Project Management Techniques to the role of a Careers Adviser'. This developed through a Service need at Leeds and my initial analysis of the data for this study. Having successfully run it once at Leeds and then more broadly for careers advisers in the north of England, I ran the course for the careers advisers at Nottingham. The feedback at the time was very positive with participants commenting that it had given them an additional helpful perspective on their work and how they could demonstrate that they are adding value to the

university agendas through fulfilling their role. AGCAS are currently considering offering this as a national training course.

These are just two examples of changes I have introduced in Nottingham which align with the recommendations in the study. It has been interesting to see the impact of such changes across the service. My experience of working with careers advisers is that they are increasingly making an overt contribution to the shape of our service delivery. I am currently in the process of developing a service strategy and I have included two careers advisers in the initial discussion group. As I had hoped, they are adding a valuable dimension to the discussions helping to align the fundamental purpose of a careers service with their professional view and institutional priorities.

8.5 Closing comments

Undertaking the DBA has been a personally and professionally transformative experience. My ways of thinking and working have changed and I have had the benefit of being able to see that change 'in real time' by making a career move part-way through this study. The DBA has also been a career-affirming experience; by undertaking this study I have also been reminded of my strong personal belief in the role of careers advisers and careers services in higher education which I feel will help me to shape my career in future years in ways that are most fulfilling. My commitment to this area of work is driven by the difference it can make to students, academics, universities and wider society and also by the people who choose to work in this area. This study has confirmed to me that careers advisers are motivated by a desire to make a positive difference to people's lives by helping them to fulfil their potential and are kind and dedicated to their cause. It is a privilege to work in this field and I hope that this study will support careers advisers and heads of service further in the fulfilment of their roles.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

This study has provided new insights into the professional identity of careers advisers in universities in the current employability climate. Following a systematic process of data collection and analysis, this thesis makes a contribution to knowledge by describing a multi-faceted identity which does not always recognise and is not always recognised by the university environment. Careers advisers have an identity of contradictions; it is an identity which is undefined and leaves individuals typically feeling under-confident, yet careers advisers show strong levels of dedication to their purpose.

Careers advisers see their profession as a vocation which provides leaders and managers of careers services with a powerful commitment to a shared purpose which they can harness to fulfil institutional priorities. Even though 'employability' is an agenda created by the higher education sector rather than careers advisers themselves, there are ways of developing careers advisers which will enable them to navigate a professional path through their instinctive student focus and the increasing expectations of students and their wider institutions. Employers and academics and can be valuable allies in boosting the expertise of careers advisers and encouraging students to engage with professional careers advice so that they are well placed to follow fulfilling graduate careers. However, in order for careers advisers to be most effective within their universities, they need to fully understand and reflect institutional and academic priorities in their approach to their profession, particularly with regard to the research agenda. This is not to compromise the profession, but to align it with the activities which brought universities into existence and which drive the majority of those who have influence in the university setting.

As befits a Doctorate in Business Administration, the recommendations suggest practical actions which can be implemented in an organisational environment, in this case universities and their careers services. These recommendations are based on the development of theory surrounding the professional identity of careers advisers. Some of these recommendations

have been ‘tested’ by the researcher in their professional role so they are offered with confidence that implementation could lead to the strengthening of the professional identity and capability of careers advisers. Such strength will benefit students, academics, professional service colleagues, university leaders and employers who engage with careers advisers. It will enable universities to develop academically able students with career motivation, and career capability, who follow graduate paths which reflect well on their university experience, provide personal fulfilment and benefit the economy and society more generally. This may seem a bold and ambitious goal; it is hoped that the contribution of this study will move careers advisers within higher education closer to a position of recognition and expertise which will enable them to make a strong, positive contribution to the realisation of that goal.

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<u>Appendix 1</u> Job Description, Employability Development Officer

Job Grade: Administrative Services Grade 5

Job Purpose:
Reporting to a Career Consultant(s) the Employability Development Officer will support the delivery of a range of services to clients both within the Centre and in specific academic Schools, designed to optimise career confidence, employability skills, work experience and personal development.

With guidance from the Employability Learning Manager the Employability Development Officer will also provide administrative support and co-ordination for initiatives and projects designed to enhance student/graduate employability and contribute to enhanced student experiences and graduate outcomes.

Duties and Responsibilities:

Students / Graduates:

- To provide consistently high quality information and advice services to students, in person in their Schools and in the central service, by email, online or on the phone.

- To work closely with staff and students in academic Schools to understand and enhance student motivation and engagement with careers and employability topics.
- To provide first-line information and advice to students in ‘drop-in’ and ‘quick-advice’ sessions on topics including CVs, job-search skills, and preparing for placements and work experience.
- To conduct individual meetings, group presentations and workshops for students.

- To use available tools and media channels to promote relevant vacancies and opportunities directly to students in the School(s).
- To liaise with students and their representatives in order to understand student demand and preferences, and to help structure provision accordingly.
- To review and provide feedback on student submissions related to skills development.
- To gain responses and evaluations from students and to work with Career Consultant(s) to tailor services provision.

Employers:

- To visit employers and professional bodies to gain and update knowledge of company, sector and wider labour market trends and opportunities, recruitment processes and policies, cultures and progression opportunities.
- In liaison with the CEC employer engagement team to encourage and support employer input to activities and events.
- To use any contact with employers to maximise the range of opportunities being offered to students, and then to stimulate student engagement with events and opportunities.
- To research and collate employer demand for skills and to regularly collate accurate labour market information relevant to the School and the programmes of study. To contribute to team labour market intelligence.

Colleagues:

- To work positively and collaboratively with colleagues in the academic Schools, the careers and employability team, placements and employer engagement teams.

- To take on additional project leadership and administration responsibilities and to support colleagues in the delivery of a range of student skills development activities and in the achievement of all related goals.
- To network and work with colleagues across the University and within the Students' Union, contributing to projects and initiatives as agreed with line manager.
- To contribute to team performance, including assisting colleagues in the provision of services for students in other Schools.

General:

- To ensure excellent client service is provided at all times.
- To provide administrative support and co-ordination on selected projects and schemes, such as skills programmes, mentoring and work-experience projects.

- To research and maintain relevant information resources and make available to students, including updating relevant web-pages.
- To write and update online and printed marketing materials and social media to optimise student engagement.
- To comply with all procedures and processes related to the role with a high degree of accuracy.
- To administer relevant sections and entries on student, company and opportunities databases and systems. Ensuring opportunities are effectively promoted to students.
- To co-ordinate arrangements for events and activities including room bookings, refreshments and monitoring budgets.
- To generate and interpret reports, case studies and statistical information as required.

- To consider and contribute to the development and continuous improvement of services, projects and processes, prioritising the needs and experiences of service beneficiaries and colleagues.
- To attend and contribute to external meetings and conferences as required.
- To undertake any training and other duties commensurate with the nature and grade of the post as and when required by designated line manager or senior management.

Person Specification

	Essential	**Desirable**
Experience	• Experience of providing careers information and advice to students or other relevant client groups. • Significant experience in a customer service role. • Significant experience with administration and computer database management. • Experience of project involvement in a busy office environment. • Experience of working with external or internal partners, such as employers, suppliers or other departments.	• Experience of working in a student-facing role in HE. • Experience and success in a careers related role.

Skills and Abilities	• Excellent communication and interpersonal skills – able to communicate appropriately and professionally at all levels. • Skilled in the provision of information, and advice to clients or customers. • Skilled in the management or co-ordination of project work or activity. • Group presentation skills. • Positive 'can do' attitude. • Able to learn, assimilate, interpret and apply complex new information. • Ability to work as part of a team, with evidence of contribution to team success. • Goal oriented, with evidence of target achievement. • High degree of personal initiative, with a solution-led approach to problems and challenges. • Flexibility and adaptability – responding positively to change and new initiatives. • Able to organise and prioritise own workload, often whilst under pressure. • Able to manage and satisfy the, sometimes conflicting, demands of a range of stakeholders.	• Formal recognition of excellence in customer service provision. • Experience of delivering interactive workshops. • Contribution to the development of successful processes leading to enhanced outcomes. • Enhanced database experience and/or management skills.

	• High degree of accuracy and attention to detail, whilst working to tight deadlines. • Excellent level of written and spoken English. • Research and report writing skills. • Good numerical skills. • Excellent general MS Office skills (Word, Excel, Outlook email, PowerPoint, Access).	
Education	• A level or equivalent, plus 5 GCSEs (A-C) incl. Maths and English, or considerable relevant professional experience.	University degree qualification.
Training	• A commitment to ongoing personal development, training, learning and adopting new skills and procedures.	
Other	• Discretion, sensitivity and ability to maintain strict confidentiality. • Able and willing to work outside standard hours if required. • Committed to observing University's Equal Opportunities and diversity policies at all times.	

Appendix 2 Job Description, Careers and Employability Adviser

Job Grade: Grade 7

Job Purpose:

This is a specialist guidance and development role based in the Careers Advisory Service working across the institution, and principally with the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Education. The role has three key elements:

1. Implement and trial a range of careers services to support student employability and career progression, which are specific to qualifications.
2. Demonstrate the added value and significant contribution made by the Careers Advisory Service to student progression and satisfaction.
3. Explore and measure innovative ways of delivering specialist Careers Education and Guidance to students through a variety of online media including online forums and other electronic tools.

Brief outline of job purpose (include scope, objectives):

- Lead responsibility for further developing effective partnerships with the Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences and Education Faculties to identify student needs relating to employability, career progression, entry and change. To trial extended services to address this student need and identify measures to clearly demonstrate impact.

- Where it is appropriate liaise with Business Development Unit to develop knowledge of labour market sectors relevant to specified faculties.

- Network with employers, organisations, professional bodies and other external organisations in order to accurately inform delivery of Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance to discrete groups of students. Share knowledge with appropriate colleagues across the institution and in particular advise faculty staff on student employability issues to inform curriculum development.

- Deliver Careers, Education, Information, Advice & Guidance to students especially through a variety of online media to include forums and webinars.

- Make significant contributions to the development of innovative Careers Education, Information, Advice & Guidance resources and communications particularly focusing on online media.

- Build relationships, develop networks and deliver training to colleagues in a range of departments across the institution to raise awareness and develop the profile of the Careers Advisory Service.

- Establish and measure impact of delivery and quality. Ensure that effective mechanisms are implemented to achieve this.

- Take active responsibility for own professional development and be proactive in engaging in relevant training in consultation with line manager.

Key tasks:

- Assist the Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences and Education Faculties in implementation of Faculty Employability Strategies and identify and trial appropriate pro-active professional careers education, advice and

- guidance to groups of students identified as likely to benefit from such interventions.

- Work with other internal units and all locations to provide careers advice and guidance to students regarding their career goals related to study. Delivery will be via one to many interactions (forums and webinars)

- Work with others to develop innovative and appropriate online resources to address student needs.

- Develop expertise and knowledge related to one or more labour market sectors to provide an expert point of referral, and facilitate communication between careers advisory staff, Faculties (including ALs), Business Development Unit and Student Support Teams, plus other appropriate staff, to inform curriculum design and development related to employability.

- Support the development and use of Personal Development Planning resources, respond to student and staff queries in navigating the process and support academics with development of curriculum based employability activities at both module and qualification level.

- Develop relationships with external employer organisations and professional bodies in liaison with the Careers Advisory Service and Business Development Unit in order to inform and develop services to students.

- Contribute to all relevant staff induction, development and training on careers and employability issues. Design and deliver training materials. Work with the Communications Team, Marketing and the Business

Development Unit to support activities to integrate the careers and employability agenda across the University.

- Contribute to the effective measurement of all extended services to students to clearly demonstrate their impact on student employability. Apply institutional policies and the principles of the Matrix quality standards to ensure that quality standards are met.

- Undertake research in partnership with appropriate colleagues, to inform the developmental and operational work of the Careers Advisory Service.

- Other duties as required by the Careers Advisory Service.

Person Specification

	Essential	**Desirable**
Education, qualifications and training	• A degree or equivalent qualification. • A professional qualification in careers guidance or equivalent; an appropriate qualification includes an NVQ Level 4 in Advice and Guidance. • Evidence of training and continuing professional development in the advice and guidance field.	
Knowledge, work and other relevant experience	• Considerable recent experience of providing Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance to diverse groups of students, for example in adult, further or higher education. • An understanding of the careers needs of adults and /or distance learners.	• Understanding of the issues affecting student employability, and the relationship with retention and progression • Awareness of the external environment and government policies as they might impact on the University, especially those focused on employability.
Skills and capabilities	• Careers advice and guidance skills developed	• Experience of working in

	to support students' autonomy and decision making. • Understanding of the positive impact of online media to deliver careers guidance. • Highly developed oral and written communication skills to convey complex information to a range of audiences; individuals and groups. • High level interpersonal skills including liaison, networking, negotiation and team working. • Confident computer skills sufficient to use IT systems effectively and to deliver guidance in an electronic world. • Good planning and organisational skills including the ability to work autonomously and manage high volumes of work. • Ability to prioritise and manage competing demands. • The ability to analyse and develop data and processes, to improve	virtual teams. • Experience of delivering training to a wide range of staff.

	services and respond to change. • The ability to interact effectively with employers and other external agencies to support the careers and employability agenda.	
Personal Qualities	• Desire to innovate and extend services proactively to students. • Excellent influencing, persuading and negotiation skills for working with colleagues less familiar with careers and employability issues. • Motivation and commitment to the continuous improvement and development of the service. • Commitment to own personal development and a willingness to keep up to date with developments in CEIAG and employability. • High levels of initiative, a cando attitude and a willingness to take ownership of issues and resolve them.	

	• Ability to think creatively to resolve complex problems. • A flexible and positive attitude to change • Ability to maintain a sense of perspective when dealing with challenging colleagues and clients.	
Additional requirements	• A sound understanding of and a commitment to equal opportunities and diversity. • Occasional travel to other locations for meetings with colleagues and conferences.	

Appendix 3 Email to Heads of Service

Dear *HeadofService*,

I am writing to you to ask for your support for my research into the professional identity of careers advisers in higher education. I have completed the taught part of a professional doctorate at Bradford School of Management and am about to undertake the data collection for my thesis. An experienced careers adviser myself, I am interested in the experience of colleagues in this role, how they perceive themselves, how they feel others perceive them, the rewards and challenges, and how that may be changing in the current climate. I am not aware of much (if any) research in this particular area. I have undertaken some interviews and a survey as part of the taught section of the doctorate and presented my findings at the 2011 AGCAS Biennial Conference (Anne-Marie Martin and Paul Redmond are aware of my work).

I have decided to focus on interviews for my thesis and have identified a sample which I hope represents the diversity within careers in HE. There are 14 institutions (there were going to be 15 but one appeared twice!) across the UK.

Would you be happy for me to interview a careers adviser in your service as part of my study? I would like to record the interview but would assure their and your institution's confidentiality in my thesis. It would only take 30 – 45 minutes of your colleague's time. I am in *YourLocality* towards the end of April and could visit *YourTown* on either Wednesday 25th April or Friday 27th April 2012.

Please could you reply to let me know if you are happy for this to take place? If you are, I will then forward you an email to send on to your careers advisers. That message would ask them to contact me directly so that we

can make arrangements accordingly. If no one volunteers, that is absolutely fine –there is no obligation to take part.

Thank you for considering this request – I know there is no such thing as a 'quiet time'! If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best Wishes

Nalayini

Nalayini Thambar | Assistant Director
0113 343 5311
University of Leeds Careers Centre | careerweb.leeds.ac.uk
Winner of the AGCAS Excellence Award 2011- Staff Development
Winner of the AGCAS Excellence Award 2011 - Marketing
Twitter @LeedsUniCareers | **Facebook** LeedsUniCareers

Appendix 4 Email to Careers Advisers

Dear Careers Advisers at *University,*

I am writing to ask if one of you would be interested in being interviewed by me as part of my doctoral research into the professional identity of careers advisers in higher education.

I have completed the taught part of a professional doctorate at Bradford School of Management and am about to undertake the data collection for my thesis. An experienced careers adviser myself, I am interested in the experience of colleagues in this role, how they perceive themselves, how they feel others perceive them, the rewards and challenges, and how that may be changing in the current climate. I am not aware of much (if any) research in this particular area. I have undertaken some interviews and a survey as part of the taught section of the doctorate and presented my findings at the 2011 AGCAS Biennial Conference (Anne-Marie Martin and Paul Redmond are aware of my work).

I have decided to focus on interviews for my thesis and have identified a sample which I hope represents the diversity within careers in HE. There are 14 institutions (there were going to be 15 but one appeared twice!) across the UK.

am in *YourLocality* towards the end of April and could visit *YourTown* on either Wednesday 25th April or Friday 27th April 2012. I am hoping that one of you will be happy to be interviewed for 30 – 45mins as part of my study. I would like to record the interview but will assure your and the institution's confidentiality in the details of my write-up.

If this is something that interests you and you are available on either of those dates, please could you contact me directly at n.p.thambar@leeds.ac.uk by Friday 13th April 2012? I will then be in touch to discuss/confirm arrangements. If there is no one who volunteers that is absolutely fine too so please don't collectively feel under pressure to 'provide' someone!

Thank you for considering this request.

Best Wishes,

Nalayini

Nalayini Thambar | Assistant Director

0113 343 5311

University of Leeds Careers Centre | careerweb.leeds.ac.uk

Winner of the AGCAS Excellence Award 2011- Staff Development

Winner of the AGCAS Excellence Award 2011 - Marketing

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Appendix 5: Overview of Respondents

Appendix 5: Overview of Respondents

NB: 'Qualification': **DipCG** = Postgraduate Diploma in Careers Guidance. **QCG** = Qualification in Careers Guidance (successor to Dip CG). **SVQ** = Scottish Vocational Qualification. **AGCAS Diploma** = Distance Learning Postgraduate Diploma in Careers Guidance through the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services. **CIPD** = Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. **NVQ** = National Vocational Qualification

	Name	Gender	Type of Institution	Full-time or Part-Time	Qualification	Outline of Route into current role
1	Clare	F	Former College of HE	P/T	Dip CG	Worked in Medical Publishing and then in marketing before taking a DipCG. Worked in 2 other universities before moving into current role.
2	Johanna	F	Pre-92	F/T	SVQ L4 Guidance – planning to start AGCAS Dip 'soon'	Trained to be a teacher, then wanted a change in career so applied for this role.
3	Morgan	F	Pre-92	F/T	AGCAS Diploma	Had 'previous life' in adult education, then returned to university as a mature student to do a theology degree. Was looking for a change in direction and visited the careers service. Job being advertised so applied. Has done AGCAS Diploma since starting.
4	Jonathan	M	Russell Group	P/T	No Careers Qual. PhD Chemistry	Research Scientist at ICI, then Careers Adviser (briefly) then a Head of Service, Director of Grad Recruitment and Development for a professional services firm then own consultancy – now does that part-time alongside this.
5	Jean	F	Russell Group	F/T	Working towards AGCAS Diploma	Worked in Arts Administration (South Bank Centre), followed by Arts Management in a local authority, then moved to current role.

	Name	Gender	Type of Institution	Full-time or Part-Time	Qualification	Outline of Route into current role
6	Paul	M	Former ACT	F/T	Dip CG	Took a Dip CG at an early point in their career , then took roles in LEA careers services then worked in a further education college before moving into their current role.
7	Christina	F	Pre-92	F/T	QCG	Worked as personal adviser in Connexions, achieved the NVQ 3 and NVQ 4 in Guidance, then worked in Further Education before taking a DipCG. Spent some time travelling then got their current role.
8	Sarah	F	University Alliance (former Polytechnic)	F/T	Dip CG	Had a long term interest in careers work. Went to university as a mature student, then worked in advisory roles and did worked on Access into HE at a former Teacher Training College before moving to current role
9	Ellie	F	Russell Group	P/T	No Careers Qual. Has CIPD and Psychometric Testing Quals	Went through the M&S Human Resources graduate training scheme, then took a placement work a in a careers service before moving into a Careers Adviser role.
10	Pat	M	Russell Group	F/T	DipCG	Took a degree as mature student after working as Employment Officer in Manpower Services. Did DipCG when graduated. Worked in Local Authority then moved into HE; 2 post-92 and 3 pre-92 institutions.
11	Anne	F	Russell Group	F/T	No Careers Qual. Has CIPD	Started in Software Engineering, then via recruitment, into Human Resources before starting work as a Careers Adviser in higher education.
12	Frederick	M	94 Group	F/T	Working towards AGCAS Diploma	Mature student, then worked in Westminster as political researcher before moving into current role

	Name	Gender	Type of Institution	Full-time or Part-Time	Qualification	Outline of Route into current role
13	Mathilda	F	University Alliance (former College of HE)	P/T	DipCG	Long term interest in working with young people. Had some HR roles, then took a Dip CG and had a range of roles (including redundancy counselling for adults) before moving into current role.
14	Grace	F	University Alliance (former College of HE)	F/T	DipCG	Trained as primary teacher, didn't want to pursue it as career. Worked as an employment officer for a LEA careers service and then did the DipCG before moving into higher education.
15	Stephanie	F	Russell Group	F/T	DipCG	Has a varied background; working in the City, publishing, BBC, marketing. Started working in higher education in a placement management role before moving to work as a careers adviser
16	Sam	M	Former Polytechnic	F/T	AGCAS Diploma and PhD	Started career in research, then moved into placement management in a post-1992 institution, then worked as a Careers Adviser in a post-1992 institution, then worked as a Head of Service before moving into current role.
17	Frances	F	94 Group	F/T	AGCAS Diploma	Always wanted to be a Careers Adviser. Got experience in retail after graduating then moved in to sector.
18	Sam	M	Russell Group	F/T	QCG	Worked at a post-1992 institution in student support, including team management. Did QCG, then worked part-time in a private institution and a post-1992 institution before moving into current role.

	Name	Gender	Type of Institution	Full-time or Part-Time	Qualification	Outline of Route into current role
19	Emma	F	Million Plus (former Polytechnic)	F/T	AGCAS Diploma	Long –term interest in being Careers Adviser, started as a trainee in a local education authority, got current role as 'trainee' and did AGCAS Diploma
20	Brenda	F	Million Plus (former College of HE)	P/T	Dip CG	Trained as a Careers Adviser after having family, worked as a Careers Adviser for 2 years before moving into management roles within careers service and then into co-ordination/leadership roles in Widening Participation partnership working. Started working in higher education after taking early retirement.
21	Duncan	M	Million Plus (former Polytechnic)	F/T	DipCG	Left School at 16. Worked in the motor trade/body work before moving into careers work via a BME Access To Training Route. Worked in local authority careers then into a post-1992 institution firstly in joint Community/Careers role

Summary:

Gender: 14 Female (66.6%) 7 Male (33.3%)

FTE: 5 Part-Time (24%) 16 Full-Time (76%)

Qualification: 9 x DipCG (43%) 2 x QCG (9.5%) 4 x AGCAS Diploma (19%) 4 x No Qual (19%) 2 x Working Towards AGCAS Diploma (9.5%)

Appendix 6 Confirmatory Email to respondents

Dear *CareersAdviser*

I am looking forward to meeting you on Monday – I can't believe how quickly time is flying by!

I thought it may be useful to give you some additional information in advance so that you know what to expect. I anticipate that our discussion will last up to 45 minutes. It will consist of a small number of open questions and there are no right or wrong answers. As the interviewer I am not planning to ask the questions, hear your answers and move on; I am hoping that it will be interactive and, if appropriate and helpful, I am also happy to share my experiences and thoughts.

As I said in my earlier email, my area of interest is the professional identity of careers advisers in HE and I am therefore trying to understand more about how it feels to be a careers adviser in HE. The type of research I am doing does not require you to do any preparation. I'll explain more when we meet but would rather not say any more now as the more I tell you, the more I will be influencing your response and directing you towards prepared answers. This may all sound very familiar; it is interesting how relevant a guidance background is when conducting research!!

In order to ensure that I am conducting my research ethically and that you are comfortable with the entire process, please find attached a consent form which I will ask you to sign after my introduction and before we start our discussion. It is effectively a checklist to protect your interests. By sending it now it gives you an opportunity to look at it before we meet. It is necessarily slightly formal but I hope you find it reassuring, not off-putting!

I look forward to meeting soon,

Best Wishes,

Nalayini

M: 0000 000000

Nalayini Thambar | Assistant Director

0113 343 5311

University of Leeds Careers Centre | careerweb.leeds.ac.uk

Winner of the AGCAS Excellence Award 2011- Staff Development

Winner of the AGCAS Excellence Award 2011 - Marketing

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Appendix 7 **Consent Form**

Study title: "What is the professional identity of careers advisers in the 'new' employability climate? Challenges and Opportunities for careers service leaders and managers".

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in an interview for my research. The purpose of this form is to make sure that you are happy to take part in the research and that you know what is involved.

Have you had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study?	YES/NO
If you have asked questions have you had satisfactory answers to your questions?	YES/NO/NA
Do you agree to take part in this study?	YES/NO
Do you agree to the interview being audio-recorded?	YES/NO
Do you understand that you are free to end the interview at any time?	YES/NO
Do you understand that you are free to choose not to answer a question without having to give a reason why?	YES/NO
Are you happy for the researcher to contact you during transcription and analysis of your interview if they need to clarify any of your comments?	YES/NO
Do you grant permission for extracts from the interview to be used in reports of the research on the understanding that your	YES/NO

anonymity will be maintained?	
Do you grant permission for an extended, but anonymised, extract from the interview to be included as an appendix in the final report?	YES/NO
Do you understand that should you decide that you no longer wish your interview to be included in the study you may contact the researcher at any time after the interview has taken place and before the final report is submitted?	YES/NO

SIGNED.....……

NAME IN BLOCK
LETTERS.....……...

DATE.....

<u>Appendix 8</u> Amended Transcript.

Nalayini: [0:02] if I place that there so that it's well within your range, and say thank you very much for agreeing to meet with me, because it's really helpful.

Anne : [0:10] My pleasure.

Nalayini: [0:11] I really appreciate that you found the time. Perhaps we could start by you telling me how you came to be a careers advisor?

Anne: [0:18] I can do the two minute intro for the training courses. [laughs]

Nalayini: [0:25] All right. [laughter]

Anne: [0:26] I did a chemistry and math degree.

Nalayini: [0:28] That's an interesting combo.

Anne: [0:29] That was about 30 years ago. That [inaudible 00:32] really scary, isn't it? Yeah, and quickly realized I hated chemistry. I did practical chemistry, so I did two computer simulations in my final year.

Nalayini: [0:40] Wow.

Anne: [0:42] I then got a job to re train as a software engineer. I was a software engineer for I think five years. It was my first graduate job. I quickly realized that I didn't like sitting in a cubicle writing machine code, but didn't know what I wanted to do, so went along to Nottingham University Career Service browsing all their leaflets because I couldn't get to see anybody, because it was well past the mutual aid dates. [1:19]Spotted… I oddly realized that HR was something which sounded quite interesting. I've always been interested in the way that people are used at work all their working life. Although I'm not really seen as a people person, a kind of traditional type.

In that time, I was then being used as a techie to go out and help recruit other techies. So when we'd go out on different recruitment tours to hotels which just happened to be very close to our main competitors. [laughs] I would then

be chatting to people in the evening about what it's like working technology. They also asked me to go out and do the graduate milkround interviews.

[2:03] One year, I spotted that they were recruiting for a personnel officer. I called their bluff and said I want to apply for that HR job, and I'll go back to a new grad salary.

Nalayini: [2:14] They, being within your organization?

Anne: [2:16] Yeah. I was being asked, as the techie, to go out and interview at universities. I said I want to apply for that, and they got very surprised, I think. Anyway, after having various interviews, including having to be interviewed by the HR director and telling him why all the things they were doing wrong with the employment of their software engineers, they gave me the job. I ended up eventually as a graduate recruitment manager.

I then changed companies, went down to Swindon [inaudible 02: [2:48] 53] , changed locations, and got a job as a personnel officer, and then worked my way up to an HR manager with the poly science company, which is where the chemistry came back in.

[3:04] At the interview, I got shown around one of their research labs, because it's very high-tech polymer science. The person I ended up working for was an HR manager. This poor scientist was trying to explain to me what this machine was.

Nalayini: [3:22] In civilian terms.

Anne: [3:23] Yeah, in civilian terms. I just said, "Oh, you mean it's an NMR machine?" "Oh, right, yeah, fine. How do you get in here?" I knew, at that point, I got the job. [laughs] I worked my way up to being a division HR manager. Fabulous company. Absolutely loved it. It was very strange at first. It was full of mavericks, very free really. Sense of humor was a requirement virtually, on the job spec for everybody. [3:51] Then they brought in an outside CEO who started clearing out all the mavericks and systemizing everything. It was changing. At that point, I'd then moved over from an HR manager's job to become a manufacturing manager within the same

company. So I'd been on a project, the HR representative on a business process reengineering project with our manufacturing division that I worked very closely with.

[4:17] When a job from one of the business unit managers managing the production units came up I said, "It's about time I should do that." I've been telling you for years, no, this is how you've got to treat your people. It's right, OK, let me have a go."

[4:32] I did that, but then as I said, shortly afterwards that coincided with this new CEO changing the company. When I saw my role models and mentors being booted out, I thought, "I don't want to stay here that I had to deal with as an HR manager who goes on and on about, "Ooh, it's not like it was in the old days."" So I used my HR contacts to maneuver myself a package even though my job wasn't under threat [laughs] and I got out with nothing to go to.

[Right and I …that was that~~inaudible 05:06]~~

~~[5:04] that~~. It was a very good company. Then I sat down with one of my friends and we just brainstormed jobs I could go and do. We'd been both graduate recruitment managers at some point so it was mentioned, "Graduate recruitment manager." I thought I don't look backwards and then she said, "OK, careers advisor at a university" and then moved onto other things and I suddenly thought, "That's it. That's what I should do."

[5:33] I went and spoke to people at Re~~a~~dding when we were doing the careers course. Talked a bit more about being careers advisor at university. Saw two jobs advertised that summer, applied for one at Newcastle and one at *Institution,* had the interviews a day apart. I'm pretty sure they were in collusion. [laughs]

[5:55] *Careers Adviser*, who I know, got the Newcastle job and I got the *Institution* one. It's a temporary contract. That was fine. That's how I came to be a careers advisor. That was about 14 years ago.

Nalayini: [6:09] I was going to say is that mid to late 90's?

Anne: [6:13] Yes that would be round about '97, '98.

Nalayini: [6:17] I went to Leeds in '98.

Anne: [6:18] Yeah?

Nalayini: [6:20] Yeah.

Anne: [6:22] Frankly the job keeps changing or there's new things you're being allowed to do but I could carry on. There's enough scope in this job to carry on doing it until I retire. It's my lottery job. If I came up on the lottery I would ~~[inaudible 06:35] but I~~ still want to do it. Maybe just part time. [laughter]

Nalayini: [6:40] In terms of qualifications, then, once you got into this area, did you do an AGCAS ~~post doc~~ diploma or anything?

Anne: [6:50] Now, that's interesting. I'd already got my CIPD qualifications, so I got my HR qualifications before coming here. I actually found it quite unnerving. I found the transition to be careers advisor quite hard, because there was definitely a feeling in those days. I'm not saying now you can do this , you've been an HR manager ~~...~~so you know what to do. [7:17] I wanted to know about doing careers. It just got to where I didn't want to do it, so I was really thrown into the deep end. I must have had some kind of training. I had some observed appointments and things like that, but no going off on training because it was about four or five years later before I ended up on an AGCAS~~dCast~~ interview skills course, which was very useful at that point, but it could have been really handy to have done it about four or five years earlier. [laughs]

I spent the first few years being quite unnerved. I didn't know if I was doing it properly so that was quite hard~~.~~ There's certainly no encouragement at all to do the AGCAS ~~[inaudible 08: [7:51] 01] post doc~~ diploma because I had my CIPD qualifications. ~~certs.~~

Nalayini: [8:09] Your current role and responsibilities?

Anne: [8:13] My current role is head of postgraduate career~~committee~~ development, which is...Basically, I take a strategic overview of our work with

post grads. The setups are that everybody sees post grads. Everybody works with post grads, although having said that, I do the lions' share and [inaudible 08:32] not all of the work with the PhDs, but some of the masters and post grads, that's shared out across all cross consultants. I think Wwe'll do individual career appointments with [inaudible 08:42] PhDs, not just training courses... I liken it to the old Equal Opps officerThe only opportunities of this sort, so every time somebody comes up with a little product, or vacation, or service, it's my job to pipe up, "Well, what about the post grads?" instead of, "What about the women [inaudible 09: [8:50] 02] ?"

[9:04] I think it's got to the stage now where people automatically know they've got I'm going to dive in quickly and say, "And for post grads?" [laughs] I'm in on everybody's induction programs. Again, just tailor it to what are you going to be doing?

[9:24] This is the post grad angled. What you need to know is that when you're designing this, you have to use inclusive language, which doesn't assume that everybody has lectures and things like that.

Nalayini: [9:36] The delivery you do is with postgraduate students?

Anne: [9:43] I've got a case load of basically chemistry and life and pharmaceutical [inaudible 09:48] sciences. Potentially, I could be seeing undergraduates and post graduates, and sometimes broader than just those disciplines. In practice, I tend not to have at the moment I have a few more appointments in my diary but I have periods where I don't have a lot of appointments [inaudible 10:03] where I don't have a lot of [inaudible 10:06] so they and you tend to try to stick PhDs in with me, particularly if they're tricky PhDs. Not even just PhDs but anybody who's looking a little bit off the wall mature. They think so and so's going to [inaudible 10: [10:15] 23] freak out if they get this in the diary, "We'll give it to Anne." [laughs]

Nalayini: [10:29] Every service needs somebody like that![inaudible 10:32] .

Anne: [10:32] They know I'm not fazed by it. I'm not necessarily going to know They know I think about the subject a lot. But I like a challenge.

Nalayini: [10:35] You like a challenge.

Nalayini Anne: [10:36] Right.

Nalayini: [laughs] [10:41] That's really interesting as a career history. In terms of your professional identity, and as I say, you've clearly worked in attached a number of contexts with a number of different roles and so on, what do you feel is your experience as a careers adviser as feeling like a professional in the universityuniversity settingy, exactly?

Anne: [11:08] That's interesting. Career advisers feeling like a professional in the university setting. I guess I'm probably a bit different to some career advisers because a lot of my work is focused outside the department and working with faculties and schools. Everybody works with schools to some extent. Although I do some central stuff, a lot of my either training or events I have to rely completely certainly for on some PhDs for the faculty training teams to put me in their programs, to publicize things that I've got coming up. I've got a network of other university training professionals, which isn't necessarily the same as academics. I've got strong links with people in all the faculties and, obviously, individuals in schools in who are post grad training set upss [inaudible 12: [11:32] 09] .

[12:13] I can't think of any time I've been made to feel anything less than one of the professionals, certainly by the people that I deal with. I always point out that I think as careers advisers, generally, we tend to deal with the nice academics because it's their roles. They're the ones who get involved in the career stuff, tends to be the nice ones who care about the students. Not always, but in most cases. So we might see a slightly distorted view. [laughs]

[12:46] I think it doesn't do any harm. I guess I've got a reputation with the people I deal with of to being professional and when they hear a bit about my background that helps, even with academics you can say I've been a graduate recruiter, I've been a ….. I'm shameless about pulling out even the software bit. It's like almost 30 years out of date, but if I've got a bunch of computer scientists in front of me I'll talk about writing machine code and they'll suddenly pay attention. [laughs] so it helps with a varied background

[13:25] I think, actually, this is one which might be a little bit careful about what you quote if you quote anything about this. My job title doesn't do me any harm. Head of post graduate career development. The big potential conflict, you'll probably see in a moment, is wanting to rationalize our job titles. In other words, take away the "head of." I'm trying to decide whether to make a stand on that one or not.

[13:58] It's been one of these things which have been mooted for certainly months now and nobody's actually formally started consulting on it so when they do…..~~.~~

Nalayini: [14:09] The "head of" you think might help?

Anne: [14:12] Yeah, it does. Maybe it helps. To be honest, maybe it gives the wrong impression. Maybe it does imply that I'm more senior than I am, but it helps us get a voice heard for careers. I'm~~t's~~ also very data oriented as well. I like stats ~~do a lot in~~ stats so having data and stats to back up things I say, I think it can be helpful ~~helps~~ with academics, although sometimes it's just a red rag to a bull where they want to ~~[inaudible 14:44]~~ tear it apart. I think it means that they can't just dismiss things when we talk about employability or employers. I did a survey on career as~~ins~~pirations for PhDs and pointing out the large proportion who were aspiring to becoming academics, even though we knew the statistics showed , a lot of the vitae[inaudible 15: [14:48] 13] stuff, even though ~~the~~ we know the proportions who don't even make a start in academia and using that to support our work in trying to broaden people's views but also, our work on the academic careers website and otherwise needed.

Nalayini: [15:34] So the evidence base is helpful?

Anne: [15:36] Yeah. I always look for evidence. I hate writing about stuff without something to back it up. Write about stuff, talk about stuff. I like to have at the very least a story in my back pocket, but preferably a graph.

Nalayini: [laughs] [15:54] That's a really nice turn of phrase. [laughter]

Anne: [16:01] I think that helps with the post grads certainly with ~~as well as~~ the PhDs. I did a one day careers intensive course we called it with our engineering and physical science faculty and PhDs a month or so ago. I had a whole set of slides worked out for a full day, lots of information given, lots of interaction as well. Two days before, I had a thought, no, instead we're doing it this way, so rejigged~~did~~ it all. Had a process to go through, not a workbook but like here's a chart where we are in the process, and got them to basically deduct a few activities. [16:42] A lot of it was them. What do you need to know about this, what do you want to know, what is going to be acceptable? That worked really well. It got really positive feedback. Then I got to ~~we were at~~ the stage where I could pull out a slide at a moment's notice. It was noticeable that throughout the day every so often I'd say are you ready for another graph? Yes, we'd like a graph, please. Showed them something about how people found jobs.

[17:08] For the kind of people that I deal with, having that evidence base and having built up a store of things, keeping all that data. It's not so much hard work to keep it current. That can make you seem professional as well. You know what you're talking about, you've got evidence to back it up.

Nalayini: [17:29] That's a really interesting point. You've given a couple of examples, but I know there is something ~~a part~~ that we definitely need to hear about in terms of your experience as a careers adviser of being recognized as a professional in the university setting. Can you give me any examples to illustrate your experience?

Anne: [17:53] I think the two, which are linked, the academic careers website, which I led the development of, and then getting the Distinguished Achievement Award, which I got on ~~[inaudible 18:05]~~ Friday as well as the awards for the university. They give out a number each year to staff.

Nalayini: [18:13] What's it for? Distinguished achievements?

Anne: [18:15] It's a group of distinguished achievement awards, annual awards, for staff and also the students. For each faculty, they have undergraduate of the year and post graduate of the year, teacher of the year,

and researcher of the year. About two or three years ago, the Institute of the PSS, Professional Support ~~Sports~~ Staff awards the equivalence of everybody in the administration. [18:43] There were there individual awards and two team awards for the PSS.

Nalayini: [18:48] And you were one of these?

Anne: [18:50] I was one of the individuals.

Nalayini: [18:51] Congratulations.

Anne: [18:51] It was lovely.

Nalayini: [18:52] Excellent and the basis of that, was that, did you apply or did they recognize your hand in these things?

Anne: [18:59] I had to be nominated. I think I'd kind of liked it if I hadn't really known anything about it and people had nominated me. But two people were involved in putting together the nomination and both of them asked me to essentially write some stuff [laughs] for them, which felt a bit weird.

Nalayini: [19:16] The idea of the nomination came from them?

Anne: [19:19] Yes, which was lovely and that again, started out, what I think I really appreciated was, it was initially started by the people I work with on, in the faculties for PhD training. Someone ~~-~~doing one of those roles, felt that I ought to be put forward for it. Then it was taken up by staff in the career service. [19:47] *Manager* Bless her ~~a~~ interviewed me so she could write stuff. I then got batted back to the facility and it was, actually the submission. The name on the submission was one of our Vice Presidents for Research or Training, I can't remember his actual title now.~~initial submission was born out of that and probably because it's part of research. So that took training, I can't wait for it. I can't [laughs] wait for my new title now.~~ That was really nice to be recognized for.

Nalayini: [20:14] That was for your work in...?

Anne: [20:16] Yeah, it's more my work ~~of a c~~overall. All the work I do with the facilities, with things like that, pathways, PhD, careers event. Obviously, if I was going to get it, it was going to be this year because of the Times Higher Award for the academic careers web site. [20:33] I know that if you do things with academics and things which play to their interests, like, encouraging or discouraging their PhDs as ~~from~~ the academics all do, what with their PhDs, that's what gets their attention. I'm in a bit of a privileged position within the career services that I know that the work that I do happens to get the attention of academics.

[20:58] That was brought out when we first started working on post-grads. We did a web survey about 12 years ago and, that wasn't common at that time, and we had about 400, 500 responses, put together report, lots of lovely colored graphs. [laughs] Five or six page report which we sent out across the university thinking, well, it's there, the message came out strong.

[21:24] I would ~~c~~characterize ~~omprise~~ it as post-grads think they are completely and utterly different to undergrads, absolutely different. What they need from the career service is pretty much what the undergrads need. So, marketing and putting things in the post graduate context, that's the difference.

What we hadn't anticipated was when we published that report, is how much interest we'd get from academics because certainly we were talking to them about things which they were interested in, which was all post grad that we're seeing day to day. We even had~~ve~~ the vice chancellor coming to the career service for the first time for a personal presentation on ~~-~~our postgraduate work.~~a personal [inaudible 22: [21:43] 03~~] .

[22:05] That's when we sussed out, actually, politically. Doing work with postgrads is really important. Probably out of proportion to the number of students we got that we do have here. It's about a quarter of our students are postgrads. It buys us credibility as a service.

Nalayini: [22:29] Tell me a bit about the academic website leading. You said that was the other example of being recognized.

Anne: [22:34] That was something we had worked on ~~should be more [inaudible 22:36]~~ rather a long time. Had the idea and employed two people to deliver it, and, in the end, delivered a large portion of it. [laughs] This small team, after both people had left. ~~[inaudible 22: [22:49] 50]~~ . But I realize that it didn't matter how much work we put into trying to help particularly PhDs think~~ing~~ about alternative careers, a large proportion of ~~-~~them are in an environment where ~~[inaudible 23:08~~] it's just not acceptable to admit that they're even interested, or they've already got socialized into thinking that they need to be an academic, that's what success is.

[23:20] I somehow wanted to get~~o~~ across the reality of what academia was, because even postdocs found they didn't understand how they were going to become an academic. It really surprised me how naive a lot of them were about the environment they were supposedly immersed in. Part of it was to tell them, "This is what you actually need to be doing."

But, also, the undercurrent ~~only [inaudible 23: [23:42] 43]~~ was recognizing that most of them aren't going to make it. It was very hard, but, eventually, I think we found it. We found the right voice to ask them challenging questions of themselves. Not telling them they couldn't become an academic, not telling them how tough it was, but saying, "How are you going to do this? Have you thought about this? Are you doing that?"

I hope that some of them will it read and think, "Actually, you know what? I don't want to do all this." Knowing full well that we've got examples there of academics talking about the lengths ~~they~~ they've had to go to and the challenges they've had to deal with. It's encouraging but challenging, with the hope that, if they decide that this challenge isn't for them, they'll go and have a look in the page which per says, " other ~~[inaudible 24: [24:07] 35]~~ alternatives ~~[inaudible 24:36]~~ ."

[laughter]

Anne: [24:38] There's a lot of resources to go and have a look at. Because often you get their attention if you talk about things outside academia.

Nalayini: [24:45] Yeah. They do need to understand the world.

Anne: [24:47] Because they're going to become academics.

Nalayini: [24:49] In terms of your experiences with being involved in that website and ~~in~~ your professional recognition, what was it about that that...

Anne: [24:58] Well, again, I think that we got some very, very positive feedback from the academics who contributed and who had a look at it for getting feed~~the speed~~ back. We did a lot of test driving with academics inside and outside the university. We interviewed lots of them, both on video and face to face. Obviously, we've listened to them over the years. I think that got credibility. [25:26] I think the big thing then was putting in for the Times Higher~~re~~ Award. We don't really do a lot of this putting stuff up for the Times Higher~~re~~ Award. Or if we do, it's not very successful as a university. Certainly not been ~~So not being~~ a strategy. So we put in for it. We got short listed. And then, when we won it. Yeah, again, that was a nice...I think the university appreciated it actually getting an award. Although surprisingly enough, there's nothing in print about it anywhere. There's a couple of things on the web. It didn't even make our "UniLife" or staff update printed publication.

Nalayini: [26:07] That's really interesting.

Anne: [26:11] So it's interesting where we're on the one hand recognized and mentioned in the vice chancellor's weekly letter.

Nalayini: [26:21] From my point of view, I thought it was a great achievement.

Anne: [26:25] Yeah. That was the pinnacle. I explained it to people as saying, "It's my equivalent of winning a BAFTA, only in a very obscure category."

Nalayini: [laughs] [26:33]

Anne: [26:34] Lighting for historical period drama or something like that. [laughs] But it's my BAFTA. It's an interesting mix. I don't think I've got a

single thing in print anywhere. It's on ~~Fortunately~~ on the website, I won that. I won that. There's no print publication.

Nalayini: [26:56] Is that part of the culture of *Institution* that they don't particularly focus on?

Anne: [27:02] No. Absolutely not. They crow about these things. [laughs]

Nalayini: [27:07] Why do you think this might be different?

Anne: [27:09] I have no idea. When we launched the academic careers website it got tucked away. It was a career supplement, so it got put in there.

Nalayini: [27:19] A career supplement in terms of...

Anne: [27:21] Our "UniLife" monthly magazine.

Nalayini: [27:23] Is the "UniLife" for staff publication then? Or is that for everybody?

Anne: [27:29] Was it "UniLife" for staff updates? Staff update is the staffed-based one. "UniLife" is the generic one. But winning the award was in the ….~~[inaudible 27:34]~~ . [laughs] I found interesting at the time, but I didn't care. I got the award. [laughs]

Nalayini: [27:48] So that was enough for you?

Anne: [27:49] Yeah.

Nalayini: [27:50] In terms of knowing what you'd achieved.

Anne: [27:54] Yeah. I think the fact that we got that award as a prompt to getting this distinguished achievement award. It's going to be now or never. [laughs] I can't win another one.

Nalayini: [28:13] Well I think it's a great achievement, I think to win a Times Highr~~h~~er Award, they are hotly contested. The sector is increasingly valuing that recognition. I think for a careers service to be behind something that wins that is ~~[inaudible 28:36]~~ a real achievement.

Anne: [28:39] I think so. I'm very proud of it. It's not as widely known as it could be or should be. Tried ways to get it publicized. It always comes as a surprise to people when I tell them, whether they're post grads or academics. They look at it and say, "Oh, this is really good. Why didn't I know about it?"

Nalayini: [laughs] [29:00] That's the actual, the resource, the site.

Anne: [29:03] Yeah.

Nalayini: [29:05] It's a well kept secret.

Anne: [29:09] I don't try to keep it a secret. I think it's one of these things, with obviously, with the high turnover of students, you've got to constantly be publicizing.

Nalayini: [29:20] Yeah, that's interesting. In terms of your experience of feeling like ~~being~~ a professional in the university environment, and the new, and I use new in inverted commas, and employability in inverted commas, because I'm not sure how I feel about the word. But it is here yet to stay. So in that new environment, have you experienced any change in your feeling on being recognized as a professional in this environment? Or do you anticipate any change?

Anne: [29:52] That's a very interesting question. Because suddenly you write the employability agenda, and all that kind of stuff, which again, I've got issues with the terminology. Yeah, it is suddenly a big flavor of the month. For the first time ever, really frankly at Institution and like ~~. Unlike~~ anything with academics, discover for the first time, they think they know everything about it. [laughs] What they're doing is revolutionary, and they'll go off and do it on their own and forget, "Oh, yeah, there is this is career ser...I forgot ~~-~~about thatthat ~~there~~." [30:24] We're getting quite a lot of that. Wherever possible if we hear hints of things going on, the thing to do is to basically rock up as quickly as you can and say, "Hey, we're here. Can we help you?" They're often very, very welcoming. It's just that it hadn't occurred to them that we could help. Or actually that was our territory, so get off our patch. [laughs] We

found some of this in some faculties before, schools before here, it does happen.

[30:57] I've always been over protective of my territory. I don't like people taking stuff away. But everyone's ~~I've always~~ worked out amicably what the boundaries are. I work on a model of, "What can I do for you?" rather than trying to block people. I know there have been a few. I can think of ~~give~~ one or two examples of people who felt that somebody in the school or faculty has been very protective of doing career stuff out in their school faculty.

[31:30] It's actually caused tension between the relationship. But I suppose underneath that, that could occur to me. But you try and swallow that, and get in there, and somehow work with them rather than against them.

[31:46] And then eventually you get a reputation that, "Oh, talk to Anne. She's really helpful," rather than "Oh, I don't want to talk to the career service." So try to say yes as much as possible. Yeah, so. Yeah, so there are more people who are going away off ~~-~~on their own.~~of their patch~~.

[32:15] An interesting one's going to be if we're seen as being sidelined, and I think that's a real danger. I don't see it imminently, but it could tend~~urn~~ to that, where the faculties in the schools start to put finance and resource and money people into people who look for jobs for their students and who will want to engage directly with employers.

[32:44] Then say, "Well, what did the career service do for us? What's the point of having that? Let's just have it all out in schools and faculties." I think that's one of the dangers of us ~~if it's~~ not being~~en~~ closely aligned with schools and faculties. We got a lot better over the years. There are stronger relationships with individual schools.

[33:05] But one model is to have people based within schools or faculties. I always come back to when we were discussing our...the last re~~-al~~ organization, what the career service was going to look like a few years back. I always come back to my experience working in HR, where we had a relatively small HR team, division with HR managers.

But the divisional HR managers and associated admin[inaudible 33: [33:29] 31] people worked were physically located within...I guess our four divisions.

Nalayini: [33:38] In their division, right.

Anne: [33:40] And so, my office was right next to the shop floor, which was right, you know, just down the corridor from the manufacturing managers, to allol intents.. I went to their management meetings. So I was part of their management team. It's just that once a fortnight, we'd all get together as HR people in the room, lock the door, and bitch and moan about our [laughs] line allying managers, who we were working with. They were fun. It was really, really strong, tight HR team. We were all generalists, apart from each one of us had a specialism. In that setup. I was providing the recruitment, discipline, and everything for the manufacturing division, but my specialism was , won't surprise you, [inaudible 34: [34:02] 22] pay benefits, graphs, stats…...

[cross talk]

[34:25] ...which I did for the whole company. Somebody else did graduate recruitment for the whole company and trained for the whole company. We had specialisms that our other HR colleagues could draw on. So we had that kind of...it's a two way matrix, or my allying manager was the HR director. But my day to day, every, all my working days were spent with the manufacturing people and their operations director.

Nalayini: [35:00] Looking back, did thate work?

Anne: [35:02] That worked incredibly well. It meant that we were close to the people that we were trying to provide the service to. It was a very paternalistic company who treated their people ever so well but very paternalistic. So really knowing the people you're trying to provide a service to that is so important. [Coughs] Excuse me. I might need to get some water.

Nalayini: [35:29] I was going to say.

Anne: [35:31] Oh gosh, yeah. [Coughs] That model could work in a careers setting. I think there's plusses and minuses but it could be made to work.

Nalayini: [35:59] And not compromise a sense of being a professional.

Anne: [36:06] It needs very very ~~You say~~ strong leadership and it needs something that you rely on each other for. I think that was the nicest part ~~[inaudible 36:12]~~ was having a specialism which you had to be talking to your other HR colleagues on the phone and at least one a fortnight face to face. We had a strong leader who bonded us all together.

Nalayini: [36:29] That was an HR ~~char~~ leader?

Anne: [36:34] I know it can work, and work very well. I think we might have missed a trick by not seriously considering that and being very careful to want to keep everything central and keep everything together. "We'll build relationships with faculties and schools and so on." It still keeps bursting out all over. [37:01] We keep recruiting people who are essentially pseudo careers staff, at least doing quite a significant proportion of what we try to deliver while still going on about well we've got a fantastic career service. I think we'll quite quickly start to think, "Oh well, what does this fantastic career service do other than ~~the careers fairs~~ ~~a career service~~?" I think that's the danger.

Nalayini: [37:25] I think that's a shared experience for a number of institutions.

Anne: [37:35] It's ~~So, not~~ new. That'll be interesting to look out for in the future.

Nalayini: [37:40] Yeah. We've been talking how you feel like a professional in the university setting. In terms of my questions, we've covered them very nicely. Is there anything else you could think of that our discussion has brought to mind?

Anne: [37:58] There's one thing which I hadn't really...It surprises me I don't really so much worry about is the fact that although I'm spending most of my time providing career advice, support, and so on with post grads and particularly for PhDs. I don't have a post grad~~doc~~ degree myself, and frankly, it doesn't bother me. [38:23] Although I had one or two others, I think it was

quite a while ago. That actually was from another institution. I was doing some work with them and their trainer who did have a PhD, and started going on about how I shouldn't feel in any way essentially inferior because I didn't have a PhD. I just laughed because it had never occurred to me to feel inferior. [laughs] My view is I've rejected PhDs as a recruiter. I have something of value to offer here.

Nalayini: [38:59] I was going to say, do you think it's maybe your industry experience that...

Anne: [39:06] Yeah, I think it helps a lot. I think I've got~~ten~~ quite sure of myself in terms of...not in everything, you have dark nights of the soul when you think, I'm useless, I'm an imposter ~~[inaudible 39:16]~~ I don't so often think, "I'm useless," and all of the rest. For the stuff I think I know about, how do you find jobs, how do come up with ways of looking at careers. I think I'm pretty much on top of my game as long as I keep moving. I'm always worried about if you ~~[inaudible 39: [39:38] 41]~~ stand still and that's it. We went through a bad period, I think, in the career service a few years ago where we spent too much time talking about how great we were.

"Oh, we were voted the top career service by employees again [inaudible 40: [39:56] 00] how fantastic at career service we are. Oh, ~~-~~but we're not~~we'll keep moving up~~." e~~E~~verything, and I've always said, "Well, look at our results. We may be a great career service, but our students aren't getting jobs any more than others. In fact, quite less in some cases."

[40:20] and that worried me ~~I ended up worrying~~ that we were getting complacent, and I think we had a few good wake up calls. Maybe some of the other stuff isn't for sharing on the recorder.

[laughs]

Nalayini: [40:34] Sorry?

Anne: [40:35] Maybe some of the other stuff isn't for sharing on... [laughs]

Nalayini: [40:36] Yes, which is absolutely fine. Is there anything else you can think of in terms of the industry that you'd like to...

Anne: [inaudible 40:43] [40:44] profession...one thing which makes me feel professional within the institution is my network of contacts. Although I'm really lousy at the proper networking, I'm lousy at maintaining relationships. I've got colleagues who are absolute masters at that kind of stuff. [41:09] Buildingand maintaining relationships. I actually now feel that there are a lot of people I can go to. I know people, and that makes you feel connected. Also, you're connected with people who know what value you can bring.

That's lovely to have that network, and that's the thing which I think each time I've ~~[inaudible 41: [41:26] 29]~~ changed jobs. In changing jobs, that's something I've realized, the value of that network that I used to have. The way it's easier to get things done before and how do I start that.. I still have that.

[41:43] That's not just a case of getting things done. I think a network helps to validate you as a professional.. As long as you have ~~There's also~~ a network of people who like what you do. They call you up and say, "Can you do this again?" That helps.

Nalayini: [42:01] It sounds as if that network of training managers sounds quite strong.

Anne: [42:05] It's training managers it~~'s~~ also people within schools and faculties for ~~the scope of practice with~~ whom you do sessions.

Nalayini: [42:10] It's a combination of training managers and academics.

Anne: [42:13] Yes, some of them are ~~our~~ academics, some of them are administrators. The academics, they often kind of change as academics do. Head of School one year and next time there's another Head of School~~[inaudible 42:20]~~ I just wanted to work with whatever quite a number of years now. It's great to be able to go and hatch new things. I've got progress in life sciences ~~[inaudible 42: [42:32] 32] sizes~~ which we always get fantastic feedback from for the final year of PhD. workshop. Every year, we sit down

and think, "How can we throw this up in the air and start again?" [laughs] And so again, every year, change it, let's do something new. It's just working with other academics who are constantly wanting to… ~~teaching~~.

Nalayini: [42:51] Do things differently.

Anne: [42:53] What are we trying to achieve? This is getting great results. Actually, I don't think we are delivering what they need even though they enjoy it, let's do something which I think that they need and they'll still enjoy it. So try to c~~C~~ome up, always looking for new things. What's with your feelings as a professional credibility is all the online presence, I forgot about that. [43:17] Having the blog which I started about four or five years ago now, that's good that helps for those people who know it.

Nalayini: [43:30] How do you mean for those people?

Anne: [43:32] Well, again, you've got a...

Nalayini: [43:34] Oh, people that are aware that that blog is there?

Anne: [43:41] Yeah, having that online presence.

Nalayini: [43:46] Is the credibility~~itability~~ there the content or the reach or...?

Anne: [43:53] The reach can be helpful because it's had a lot of readers over the years, absolutely. We still get a lot of traffic but also the content when people read it and, this is what I can't write blog posts which are...I've seen a lot of blog posts even in my failed working at post grad stuff, or referring onto stuff which I think is very light weight and doesn't say anything very much. I can't recommend this. [laughs] [44:24] I definitely curate on my Twitter feed. I'm really quite picky about what I retweet. Not that there is anything with stuff I don't retweet. It's just that, I don't think it actually has something quite interesting and new and isn't backed up. You'll find plenty of ~~plan tier~~ graphs on my blog.

Nalayini: [44:43] I must go and have a look now.

Anne: [44:45] Substantial posts, having said that, the last year I lost the love for the blog. I got sucked into doing a lot of promotional stuff at all our events and blah, blah, blah. It just doesn't feel particularly exciting so I've been starting, trying to do pureier posts that are making it more substantial again.

Nalayini: [45:09] Substantial is in terms of...?

Anne: [45:12] Having something to say which will make people stop and think differently, I think. I particularly like the counterintuitive, paradigm shift type stuff. Having said that, I've just been blogging about empty coke canscart counts, sometimes you need to some off topicthe beat stuff [laughs] to generate some interest given the size of our community.in our science. [45:43] I'm the one that is communicating as to always commuting of why two empty, two coke art cansounts which are six years past theire sell by date which we discovered in the career service cupboard, unopened and almost empty.

Nalayini: [45:57] Unopened.

Anne: [45:58] And almost empty. We eventually had some kitchen experiments which are videoed on my phone and I uploaded to a YouTube [laughs] and put on my blog, probably to see if I could do that, which I could but probably to just engage other people thinking about...

Nalayini: [46:17] Yeah, engaging them differently. I must admit, I haven't mastered the whole social media, blogging, Facebook thing. It doesn't naturally seem to resonate with how I communicate or connect with people. I'm aware that there's a particular style and approach that I don't naturally fall into, so I really admire people that can.

Anne: [46:45] Well, it's interesting. One of the people who I'd corresponded with, I've tweeted with, a PhDthesis [inaudible 46:53] from Australia came over and did a talk. She's a lovely blogger academic whose field is now supporting online communications of PhDs, online presence , far more prolific than I am in terms of online presence, [inaudible 47:04] how does that train of thought go? She came over. One of the things that she said in her

talk was about social media for PhDs where she actually ~~rang true~~ran truths. Often, blogging and tweeting is actually more helpful for introverts. It's a way that introverts can have that pithy bon mot~~[inaudible 47: [47:14] 31]~~ that kind of thought, but it doesn't have to be an instant response and verbalized and move on.

[47:40] It does appeal to those of us who are natural introverts, because you've got time to think and process, and then tweet something or blog something. I think that's why it's appealed to quite a lot of people in that whole PhD environment.

[47:59] For some people, for those who are more comfortable with going out and finding people to just go and talk to and chat. All of this online stuff, frankly, it doesn't necessarily appeal quite as much as somebody who is a little bit more...can't come out with the words and thinks five minutes later, "I should have said that." I need time to think about it.

Nalayini: [48:25] That would fit, actually. That would fit. The wordsmanship and the crafting of some of these tweets and blog posts is quite spectacular. I just think I don't have that way of doing it, but as you say, I'm someone that just ~~[inaudible 48:45]~~ It's all there straight away. Off ~~it goes~~ whether I like it or not. ~~he goes~~.

Anne: [48:49] We envy you. I'm the only one who can envy you like that is by doing it with some kind of time removed on Twitter. [laughter]

Nalayini: [48:56] Then it's there. It's captured, whereas our stuff just goes, and then it's gone and then that's it, I suspect that [inaudible 49:01] very much so...

Anne: [49:04] I think that's one difference in the online presence. I don't know whether post grads and PhDs are, as a group, more introverted. It feels intuitive that they might be, but that mostly , things which are intuitive are working. ~~[inaudible 49:18]~~ . [49:22] I don't know, but certainly, a group of people seems to look into that. There's things like on Twitter the #PhD. chat or #PhD. advice search terms, which I know are a lifeline ~~lot of fun~~ to some

PhDs because they're isolated, nobody understands their experiences, and they know that either once a week or just generically, they can just...

Nalayini: [49:49] That's a bit of a light bulb moment for me, actually, because I have a lot of good friends who are academics and who are constantly on Facebook and on Twitter, and I just can't keep up, and I don't quite seem to say the right thing when I do.

Nalayini Anne: [50:10] As you say, there is always a way of generalizing and stereotyping.

Nalayini: [50:14] That fits, actually.

Anne: [50:18] That allowed me to have an online presence, which can help as a professional~~s~~, because I've got several post grad Twitter account, *AnneSurname* professional Twitter account, and a completely separate, non-professional Twitter account.

Nalayini: [50:35] OK, right.

Anne: [50:37] I separate out my different personae. That works for me. It doesn't necessarily work in the same way for everybody.

Nalayini: [50:45] There is a professional online presence, as far as you're concerned, right~~?~~

Anne: [50:51] Yes. OK?

Nalayini: [50:55] I've learned something. That's really enlightening. Thank you.

Anne: [50:59] Thank you.

Nalayini: [51:00] All right.

Anne: [51:01] Have you got what you needed?

Nalayini: [51:01] I most certainly have. Shall I press stop?

Transcription by CastingWords edited by NT

Appendix 9 One Page Summary

Appendix 10. Initial Thoughts on Data Analysis.

1. How do Careers Advisers in Higher Education construct their Professional Identity? Possible Super-Ordinate Themes

1.1 Professional training and CPD

Conversations about 'how you came to be a careers adviser in HE' included discussion about qualification. - Most of the respondents made a link between their initial training and/or continuing professional development and their sense of feeling like a professional. Points of interest

a. A number of respondents have a Postgraduate Diploma in Careers Guidance – DipCG BUT the DipCG is not HE specific – a number of people who undertook the Dip CG felt it did not prepare them for their role in HE
b. A number have an AGCAS Postgraduate Diploma in Careers Work in HE. BUT the AGCAS Diploma is only taken by people once they have started work as a careers adviser in HE
c. Not all respondents have a careers-related qualification
d. Induction/initial support when starting in role – a number of people mentioned a lack of this when they started in their roles. Those who moved into the role from another profession and without the qualification were surprised by the expectation /assumption that they would just be able to do the job.
e. Some respondents commented on the lack of professional development opportunities within their service or the lack of requirement for CPD to practise as a Careers Adviser

Some relevant quotes

"I feel like the training I had was not adequate enough to prepare me in a lot of ways for the type of demands that are being placed on careers advisers now." (DipCG-qualified careers adviser)

“I actually found it quite unnerving. I found the transition to be careers adviser quite hard, because there was definitely a feeling in those days. I’m not saying now...you can do this, you’ve been an HR Manager so you know what to do.”

“Even when I started, I didn’t actually know what I was doing. I didn’t really know what was getting into and absolutely had a crisis of identity at that stage.”

1.2 Through reference to/comparison with the student-facing elements of the academic and university community

Interaction with other parts of the university featured in all the interviews. Points of interest:

a. Unless the respondent’s caseload includes researchers, there is little or no reference to the university research agenda
b. Almost all respondents express awareness of the difference in the ‘level’ or nature of their qualifications compared with those that academics are perceived to have
c. It is in relation to the rest of the university (rather than students) where title is an issue
d. Working in partnership with academics or other university colleagues and curricular input have a strong impact on the professional identity of the respondents.

Some relevant quotes:

“I always point out that I think as careers advisers, generally, we tend to deal with the nice academics because it’s their roles. They’re the ones who get involved in the career stuff, tends to be the nice ones who care about the students.”

“I suppose the qualifications issue of a Bachelors degree, and maybe if I had a Masters degree or a PhD, I would be seen in a stronger light maybe.”

“I think it [an MA] might give me more. I might feel like “oh, OK, yes, I’ve got the academic qualification.” So perhaps where you’re expected to be more like a lecturer you can feel a bit more like you’ve done all the research. You’re like a master of your field.”

I also did it [Postgraduate Certificate in Education and Training] maybe to give me a little bit more Kudos with academics to show that I am qualified in a teaching element, so I can create modules and create curriculum on your behalf.”

“My job title doesn’t do me any harm. Head of postgraduate career development...To be honest, maybe it gives the wrong impression. Maybe it does imply that I’m more senior than I am, but it helps us get a voice heard for careers.”

1.3 By drawing credibility from previous non-careers-advisory work and/or links to employers

There were a lot of uses of the words ‘credibility’ and ‘kudos’ in the interviews, in all cases unprompted by the researcher. Some of the male respondents used the terms more frequently within their responses.

Quotes:

“..when they hear a bit about my background that helps, even with academics. You can say, “I’ve been a graduate recruiter, I’ve been a ..I’m shameless about pulling out even the software bit. It’s like almost 30 years out of date but if I’ve got a bunch of computer scientists in front of me, I’ll talk about writing machine code and they’ll suddenly pay attention. [laughs].

" I think, I've been lucky in the departments that I've worked with in that, they are all departments that either my degree or my background has given me a little bit of kudos, of credibility."

"I've had to learn from experience to adapt and always lead with an external brief, and so, they [students] think, oh he goes out and speaks to employers. If employers are engaging with him, he must be.. he must have something about...do you know what I mean? It's that kind of thought. It's like, they need to know that we don't just live in that goldfish bowl, that we're out there in the real world being engaging with employers and finding out what employers are saying.."

1.4 By framing their purpose and feeling rewarded through student interactions and outcomes rather than the through the lens of institutional goals.

a) Many respondents used very positive/emotive language when speaking about their work with students and feel that 'the student' is what motivates them to do their job
b) A minority of respondents talked about taking a strategic perspective on delivery in the new climate. Two former Heads of Service, now working as careers adviser expressed their 'acceptance' that this is not a strategic role.

Quotes:

"In terms of my passion and enthusiasm, God I love it. I wouldn't change that for the world. I love the students."

"I find the reward through working with students fantastic. Students is what makes my day."

"Students are the most important thing."

"I did used to enjoy that area of work, in terms of strategically looking at what's around there. That's a big difference but we can't expect

that, because that's not the job we applied for." (former LEA strategic manager, now a careers adviser).

1.5 Within the context of Institutional Recognition

a. For some respondents there is an awareness of where the careers service is positioned within the institution and, therefore the way it is seen (particularly when it is part of Student Services).
b. Three respondents had been nominated for and received awards from their institution for academically linked/curricular-based activity and perceived non-academic elements of the institution to respond differently to them compared to academic award-winners.
c. The work of the Heads of Service in strengthening the position of the service or advisers within the institution was often recognised.

Example Quote:

"For *InstitutionX we had* a very proactive Head of Careers, and the service was fully recognized and acknowledged within the university. Therefore you were slotting into an environment where you automatically felt quite valued, not just by the careers service, but within the institution generally. I think that was a lot to do with the way we were led, with the management of the service."

"In that university, and virtually every other university I've worked at, careers advisors and careers have always been designated as support rather than academics. We've almost got a label to start with which says we're not academics."

1.6 By articulating alternative " definitions" of the purpose/nature of their role:

Across the interviews, respondents conceptualised the role of a careers adviser in a number of different ways:

a) Specialist
b) Not an Expert
c) Generic
d) Facilitator
e) Educator
f) Empowering Educator

2. What do they feel will be the impact of the 'new' employability climate on their sense of professional identity?

a) All respondents feel that they are experiencing or anticipating change as their institutions become more interested in employability.
b) Generally they feel that there is potential for careers advisers and careers services to have an increased profile but they recognise that with that, there will be 'no place to hide'.
c) In some cases there are concerns that other parts of the institution are/will start to deliver activities that Careers Services already do.
d) In many cases concern was expressed that if there is an increase in demand, they and their services are not resourced to meet them.

Example quotes:

"I think it could be a really good opportunity for careers advisors to create a sort of new identity, then, a more dynamic one than perhaps what they had in the past, where it's not just , we do one to one appointments , and that's it."

"People are running with things without really taking note of is this actually going to achieve anything or is it just brownie points? That's what I probably say because employability is just crazy here, and nobody's got a rein on it, where it's going or what it's doing."

“Because particularly now, the agenda’s coming our way, and there’s money to be had. If we wanted, this is our time!”

“To a certain extent we’ve got the weight of the reputation of the university on our shoulders, because we can’t just churn out people with subject knowledge, they’ve got to have the right skill set as well..”

November 2012

Appendix 11 Annotated Interview Transcript

p.1

Interview with Anne

Theme	Transcript	Comments
	Nalayini: [0:02] if I place that there so that it's well within your range, and say thank you very much for agreeing to meet with me, because it's really helpful. **Anne W**: [0:10] My pleasure. **Nalayini**: [0:11] I really appreciate that you found the time. Perhaps we could start by you telling me how you came to be a careers advisor? **Anne**: [0:18] I can do the two minute intro for the training courses. [laughs] **Nalayini**: [0:25] All right. [laughter] **Anne**: [0:26] I did a chemistry and math degree. **Nalayini**: [0:28] That's an interesting combo. **Anne**: [0:29] That was about 30 years ago. That [inaudible 00:32] really scary, isn't it? Yeah, and quickly realized I hated chemistry. I did practical chemistry, so I did two computer simulations in my final year. **Nalayini**: [0:40] Wow. **Anne**: [0:42] I then got a job to re train as a software engineer. I was a software engineer for I think five years. It was my first graduate job. I quickly realized that I didn't like sitting in a cubicle writing machine code, but didn't know what I wanted to do, so went along to Nottingham University Career Service browsing all their leaflets because I couldn't get to see anybody, because it was well past the mutual aid dates. [1:19]Spotted… I oddly realized that HR was something which sounded quite interesting. I've always been interested in the way that people are used at work all their working life. Although I'm not really seen as a people person, a kind of traditional type. In that time, I was then being used as a techie to go out and help recruit other techies. So when we'd go	Interesting! Met well back to Careers Service – (see alum behaviour)

	out on different recruitment tours to hotels which just happened to be very close to our main competitors. [laughs] I would then be chatting to people in the evening about what it's like working technology. They also asked me to go out and do the graduate milkround interviews. [2:03] One year, I spotted that they were recruiting for a personnel officer. I called their bluff and said I want to apply for that HR job, and I'll go back to a new grad salary. **Nalayini**: [2:14] They, being within your organization? **Anne**: [2:16] Yeah. I was being asked, as the techie, to go out and interview at universities. I said I want to apply for that, and they got very surprised, I think. Anyway, after having various interviews, including having to be interviewed by the HR director and telling him why all the things they were doing wrong with the employment of their software engineers, they gave me the job. I ended up eventually as a graduate recruitment manager. I then changed companies, went down to Swindon [inaudible 02: [2:48] 53] , changed locations, and got a job as a personnel officer, and then worked my way up to an HR manager with the polyscience company, which is where the chemistry came back in. [3:04] At the interview, I got shown around one of their research labs, because it's very high-tech polymer science. The person I ended up working for was an HR manager. This poor scientist was trying to explain to me what this machine was. **Nalayini**: [3:22] In civilian terms. **Anne**: [3:23] Yeah, in civilian terms. I just said, "Oh, you mean it's an NMR machine?" "Oh, right, yeah, fine. How do you get in here?" I knew, at that point, I got the job. [laughs] I worked my way up to being a division HR manager. Fabulous company. Absolutely loved it. It was very strange at first. It was full of mavericks, very free really. Sense of humor was a requirement virtually, on the job spec for everybody. [3:51] Then they brought in an outside CEO who started clearing out all the mavericks and systemizing everything. It was changing. At that point, I'd then moved over from an HR manager's job to become a manufacturing manager within the same company. So I'd been on a project, the HR representative on a business process reengineering project with our manufacturing division that I worked very closely with. [4:17] When a job from one of the business unit managers managing the production units came up I said, "It's about time I should do that." I've been telling you for years, no, this is how you've got to treat your	Shows flexible approach to career; moved software eng -> HR. Preparedness to "go backwards" to go forward

	people. It's right, OK, let me have a go." [4:32] I did that, but then as I said, shortly afterwards that coincided with this new CEO changing the company. When I saw my role models and mentors being booted out, I thought, "I don't want to stay here that I had to deal with as an HR manager who goes on and on about, "Ooh, it's not like it was in the old days."" So I used my HR contacts to maneuver myself a package even though my job wasn't under threat [laughs] and I got out with nothing to go to. [Right and I …that was that . It was a very good company. Then I sat down with one of my friends and we just brainstormed jobs I could go and do. We'd been both graduate recruitment managers at some point so it was mentioned, "Graduate recruitment manager." I thought I don't look backwards and then she said, "OK, careers advisor at a university" and then moved onto other things and I suddenly thought, "That's it. That's what I should do." [5:33] I went and spoke to people at Reading when we were doing the careers course. Talked a bit more about being careers advisor at university. Saw two jobs advertised that summer, applied for one at Newcastle and one at *Institution*, had the interviews a day apart. I'm pretty sure they were in collusion. [laughs] [5:55]*careers adviser,* who I know, got the Newcastle job and I got the *Institution* one. It's a temporary contract. That was fine. That's how I came to be a careers advisor. That was about 14 years ago. **Nalayini**: [6:09] I was going to say is that mid to late 90's? **Anne**: [6:13] Yes that would be round about '97, '98. **Nalayini**: [6:17] I went to Leeds in '98. **Anne**: [6:18] Yeah? **Nalayini**: [6:20] Yeah. **Anne**: [6:22] Frankly the job keeps changing or there's new things you're being allowed to do but I could carry on. There's enough scope in this job to carry on doing it until I retire. It's my lottery job. If I came up on the lottery I would still want to do it. Maybe just part time. [laughter]	Proactivity in approach to career Relatively unplanned move into HE careers; thought about it, applied, got job – no qual, no training of other professions. Strong positive feeling towards job – not just a job

Training/ entry to be a CA

Love of Role

Training/ CPD for being a CA – experience of induction + need for qual	**Nalayini**: [6:40] In terms of qualifications, then, once you got into this area, did you do an AGCAS diploma or anything? **Anne**: [6:50] Now, that's interesting. I'd already got my CIPD qualifications, so I got my HR qualifications before coming here. I actually found it quite unnerving. I found the transition to be careers advisor quite hard, because there was definitely a feeling in those days. I'm not saying now you can do this , you've been an HR manager so you know what to do. [7:17] I wanted to know about doing careers. It just got to where I didn't want to do it, so I was really thrown into the deep end. I must have had some kind of training. I had some observed appointments and things like that, but no going off on training because it was about four or five years later before I ended up on an AGCAS interview skills course, which was very useful at that point, but it could have been really handy to have done it about four or five years earlier. [laughs] I spent the first few years being quite unnerved. I didn't know if I was doing it properly so that was quite hard There was certainly no encouragement at all to do the AGCAS diploma because I had my CIPD qualifications. **Nalayini**: [8:09] Your current role and responsibilities? **Anne**: [8:13] My current role is head of postgraduate career development, which is...Basically, I take a strategic overview of our work with post grads. The setups are that everybody sees post grads. Everybody works with post grads, although having said that, I do the lions' share and not all of the work with the PhDs, but some of the masters and post grads, that's shared out across all cross consultants. We'll do individual career appointments with PhDs, not just training courses... I liken it to the old Equal Opps officer so every time somebody comes up with a little product, or vacation, or service, it's my job to pipe up, "Well, what about the post grads?" instead of, "What about the women?" [9:04] I think it's got to the stage now where people automatically know they've got to dive in quickly and say, "And for post grads?" [laughs] I'm in on everybody's induction programs. Again, just tailor it to what are you going to be doing? [9:24] This is the post grad angle. What you need to know is that when you're designing this, you have to use inclusive language, which doesn't assume that everybody has lectures and things like that. **Nalayini**: [9:36] The delivery you do is with postgraduate students? **Anne**: [9:43] I've got a case load of basically chemistry and life and pharmaceutical sciences.	Even though has made career transitions in the past, this one is hard. Because ppl from other area without qual, assumption can do job Training very delayed – again not like other professions.

Potentially, I could be seeing undergraduates and post graduates, and sometimes broader than just those disciplines. In practice, I tend not to have at the moment I have a few more appointments in my diary but I have periods where I don't have a lot of appointments so they tend to try to stick PhDs in with me, particularly if they're tricky PhDs. Not even just PhDs but anybody who's looking a little bit off the wall mature. They think so and so's going to freak out if they get this in the diary, "We'll give it to Anne." [laughs]

Nalayini: [10:29] Every service needs somebody like that!

Anne: [10:32] They know I'm not fazed by it. I'm not necessarily going to know But I like a challenge.

Nalayini [10:36] Right.

Nalayini: [laughs] [10:41] That's really interesting as a career history. In terms of your professional identity, and as I say, you've clearly worked in a number of contexts with a number of different roles and so on, what do you feel is your experience as a careers adviser as feeling like a professional in the university setting?

Anne: [11:08] That's interesting. Career advisers feeling like a professional in the university setting. I guess I'm probably a bit different to some career advisers because a lot of my work is focused outside the department and working with faculties and schools. Everybody works with schools to some extent. Although I do some central stuff, a lot of my either training or events I have to rely completely certainly for PhDs for the faculty training teams to put me in their programs, to publicize things that I've got coming up. I've got a network of other university training professionals, which isn't necessarily the same as academics. I've got strong links with people in all the faculties and, obviously, individuals in schools in post grad training set ups[inaudible 12: [11:32] 09] .

[12:13] I can't think of any time I've been made to feel anything less than one of the professionals, certainly by the people that I deal with. I always point out that I think as careers advisers, generally, we tend to deal with the nice academics because it's their roles. They're the ones who get involved in the career stuff, tends to be the nice ones who care about the students. Not always, but in most cases. So we might see a slightly distorted view. [laughs]

[12:46] I think it doesn't do any harm. I guess I've got a reputation with the people I deal with of being professional and when they hear a bit about my background that helps, even with academics you can say I've been a graduate recruiter, I've been a …. I'm shameless about pulling out even the software bit. It's like almost 30 years out of date, but if I've got a bunch of computer scientists in front of me I'll talk about

Working with academics – nature of contacts: academics c.f. "administrators"

Credibility through previous experience

Strong link not primarily/necessarily to academics but to 'others' in depts; sense of professionalism reinforced by them + "nice"/self-selected academics – make a difference [This may increase in new environment]

Sense of professionalism reinforced with academics, relying to non-CA experience

writing machine code and they'll suddenly pay attention. [laughs] so it helps with a varied background

[13:25] I think, actually, this is one which might be a little bit careful about what you quote if you quote anything about this. My job title doesn't do me any harm. Head of post graduate career development. The big potential conflict, you'll probably see in a moment, is wanting to rationalize our job titles. In other words, take away the "head of." I'm trying to decide whether to make a stand on that one or not.

[13:58] It's been one of these things which have been mooted for certainly months now and nobody's actually formally started consulting on it so when they do…..

Nalayini: [14:09] The "head of" you think might help?

Anne: [14:12] Yeah, it does. Maybe it helps. To be honest, maybe it gives the wrong impression. Maybe it does imply that I'm more senior than I am, but it helps us get a voice heard for careers. I'm also very data oriented as well. I like stats stats so having data and stats to back up things I say, I think it can be helpful with academics, although sometimes it's just a red rag to a bull where they want to tear it apart. I think it means that they can't just dismiss things when we talk about employability or employers. I did a survey on career aspirations for PhDs and pointing out the large proportion who were aspiring to becoming academics, even though we knew the statistics showed a lot of the vitae[inaudible 15:[14:48] 13] stuff, even though we know the proportions who don't even make a start in academia and using that to support our work in trying to broaden people's views but also, our work on the academic careers website and otherwise needed.

Nalayini: [15:34] So the evidence base is helpful?

Anne: [15:36] Yeah. I always look for evidence. I hate writing about stuff without something to back it up. Write about stuff, talk about stuff. I like to have at the very least a story in my back pocket, but preferably a graph.

Nalayini: [laughs] [15:54] That's a really nice turn of phrase. [laughter]

Anne: [16:01] I think that helps with the post grads certainly with the PhDs. I did a one day careers intensive course we called it with our engineering and physical science faculty and PhDs a month or so ago. I had a whole set of slides worked out for a full day, lots of information given, lots of interaction as well. Two days before, I had a thought, no, instead we're doing it this way, so re-jiggedit all. Had a process to go through, not a workbook but like here's a chart where we are in the process, and got them to basically deduct a few activities. [16:42] A lot of it was them. What do you need to know about this,

evidence of non-CA exp => greater credibility

Impact of Job Title

Approach to role aligned with academic approach

acknowledges value of previous experience for credibility.

"not any harm" => CA title might?

=> CA not senior enough to have influence - CA not as impressive a title?

uses data as evidence for talk - maps onto academic approach - helps credibility/acceptance with academics; NB - academics 'tear it apart' - diff (challenging way of working).

what do you want to know, what is going to be acceptable? That worked really well. It got really positive feedback. Then I got to the stage where I could pull out a slide at a moment's notice. It was noticeaable that throughout the day every so often I'd say are you ready for another graph? Yes, we'd like a graph, please. Showed them something about how people found jobs.

[17:08] For the kind of people that I deal with, having that evidence base and having built up a store of things, keeping all that data. It's not so much hard work to keep it current. That can make you seem professional as well. You know what you're talking about, you've got evidence to back it up.

Nalayini: [17:29] That's a really interesting point. You've given a couple of examples, but I know there is something that we definitely need to hear about in terms of your experience as a careers adviser of being recognized as a professional in the university setting. Can you give me any examples to illustrate your experience?

Anne: [17:53] I think the two, which are linked, the academic careers website, which I led the development of, and then getting the Distinguished Achievement Award, which I got on Friday as well as the awards for the university. They give out a number each year to staff.

Nalayini: [18:13] What's it for? Distinguished achievements?

Anne: [18:15] It's a group of distinguished achievement awards, annual awards, for staff and also the students. For each faculty, they have undergraduate of the year and post graduate of the year, teacher of the year, and researcher of the year. About two or three years ago, the Institute of the PSS, Professional Support Staff awards the equivalence of everybody in the administration. [18:43] There were there individual awards and two team awards for the PSS.

Nalayini: [18:48] And you were one of these?

Anne: [18:50] I was one of the individuals.

Nalayini: [18:51] Congratulations.

Anne: [18:51] It was lovely.

Nalayini: [18:52] Excellent and the basis of that, was that, did you apply or did they recognize your hand in these things?

Anne: [18:59] I had to be nominated. I think I'd kind of liked it if I hadn't really known anything about

importance research/evidence base for proj m.d - PhDs in this case but could be more general

"support staff" of academics - 'prof support staff' - still hierarchy

it and people had nominated me. But two people were involved in putting together the nomination and both of them asked me to essentially write some stuff [laughs] for them, which felt a bit weird.

Nalayini: [19:16] The idea of the nomination came from them?

Anne: [19:19] Yes, which was lovely and that again, started out, what I think I really appreciated was, it was initially started by the people I work with on, in the faculties for PhD training. Someone doing one of those roles, felt that I ought to be put forward for it. Then it was taken up by staff in the career service. [19:47] *Manager* , Bless her, interviewed me so she could write stuff. I then got batted back to the facility and it was, actually the submission. The name on the submission was one of our Vice Presidents for Research or Training, I can't remember his actual title now. That was really nice to be recognized for.

Nalayini: [20:14] That was for your work in...?

Anne: [20:16] Yeah, it's more my work overall. All the work I do with the facilities, with things like that, pathways, PhD, careers event. Obviously, if I was going to get it, it was going to be this year because of the Times Higher Award for the academic careers web site. [20:33] I know that if you do things with academics and things which play to their interests, like, encouraging or discouraging their PhDs as the academics all do, what with their PhDs, that's what gets their attention. I'm in a bit of a privileged position within the career services that I know that the work that I do happens to get the attention of academics.

[20:58] That was brought out when we first started working on post-grads. We did a web survey about 12 years ago and, that wasn't common at that time, and we had about 400, 500 responses, put together report, lots of lovely colored graphs. [laughs] Five or six page report which we sent out across the university thinking, well, it's there, the message came out strong.

[21:24] I would characterize it as post-grads think they are completely and utterly different to undergrads, absolutely different. What they need from the career service is pretty much what the undergrads need. So, marketing and putting things in the post graduate context, that's the difference.

What we hadn't anticipated was when we published that report, is how much interest we'd get from academics because certainly we were talking to them about things which they were interested in, which was all post grad that we're seeing day to day. We even had the vice chancellor coming to the career service for the first time for a personal presentation on our postgraduate work.] .

[22:05] That's when we sussed out, actually, politically. Doing work with postgrads is really important.

This is not aligning with UG Students - Seems to have impact/ attract interest

PhD Trainers Mod nomination for Distinguished Service Award - may not originate with academics, But had VP support

Importance / relevance / links to academic agenda - may start to be the case more broadly with new employability climate?

	Probably out of proportion to the number of students we got that we do have here. It's about a quarter of our students are postgrads. It buys us credibility as a service. **Nalayini**: [22:29] Tell me a bit about the academic website leading. You said that was the other example of being recognized. **Anne**: [22:34] That was something we had worked on rather a long time. Had the idea and employed two people to deliver it, and, in the end, delivered a large portion of it. [laughs] This small team, after both people had left.. But I realize that it didn't matter how much work we put into trying to help particularly PhDs think about alternative careers, a large proportion of them are in an environment where] it's just not acceptable to admit that they're even interested, or they've already got socialized into thinking that they need to be an academic, that's what success is. [23:20] I somehow wanted to get across the reality of what academia was, because even post docs found they didn't understand how they were going to become an academic. It really surprised me how naive a lot of them were about the environment they were supposedly immersed in. Part of it was to tell them, "This is what you actually need to be doing." But, also, the undercurrent was recognizing that most of them aren't going to make it. It was very hard, but, eventually, I think we found it. We found the right voice to ask them challenging questions of themselves. Not telling them they couldn't become an academic, not telling them how tough it was, but saying, "How are you going to do this? Have you thought about this? Are you doing that?" I hope that some of them will it read and think, "Actually, you know what? I don't want to do all this." Knowing full well that we've got examples there of academics talking about the lengths they've had to go to and the challenges they've had to deal with. It's encouraging but challenging, with the hope that, if they decide that this challenge isn't for them, they'll go and have a look in the page which rsays, " other alternatives." [laughter] **Anne**: [24:38] There's a lot of resources to go and have a look at. Because often you get their attention if you talk about things outside academia. **Nalayini**: [24:45] Yeah. They do need to understand the world. **Anne**: [24:47] Because they're going to become academics.	Maps "professional socialisation" amongst academics? Negative association between "clients" + CA as CA not delivering messages they want to hear?

Importance of Credibility Lack of Institutional Recognition	**Nalayini**: [24:49] In terms of your experiences with being involved in that website and your professional recognition, what was it about that that... **Anne**: [24:58] Well, again, I think that we got some very, very positive feedback from the academics who contributed and who had a look at it for getting feedback. We did a lot of test driving with academics inside and outside the university. We interviewed lots of them, both on video and face to face. Obviously, we've listened to them over the years. I think that got credibility. [25:26] I think the big thing then was putting in for the Times Higher Award. We don't really do a lot of this putting stuff up for the Times Higher Award. Or if we do, it's not very successful as a university. Certainly not been a strategy. So we put in for it. We got short listed. And then, when we won it. Yeah, again, that was a nice...I think the university appreciated it actually getting an award. Although surprisingly enough, there's nothing in print about it anywhere. There's a couple of things on the web. It didn't even make our "UniLife" or staff update printed publication. **Nalayini**: [26:07] That's really interesting. **Anne**: [26:11] So it's interesting where we're on the one hand recognized and mentioned in the vice chancellor's weekly letter. **Nalayini**: [26:21] From my point of view, I thought it was a great achievement. **Anne**: [26:25] Yeah. That was the pinnacle. I explained it to people as saying, "It's my equivalent of winning a BAFTA, only in a very obscure category." **Nalayini**: [laughs] [26:33] **Anne**: [26:34] Lighting for historical period drama or something like that. [laughs] But it's my BAFTA. It's an interesting mix. I don't think I've got a single thing in print anywhere. It's on on the website, I won that. I won that. There's no print publication. **Nalayini**: [26:56] Is that part of the culture of *Institution* that they don't particularly focus on? **Anne**: [27:02] No. Absolutely not. They crow about these things. [laughs] **Nalayini**: [27:07] Why do you think this might be different? **Anne**: [27:09] I have no idea. When we launched the academic careers website it got tucked away. It	I asked about "professional recognition" NOT Credibility; Plugged by Anne !! Institutional culture very pro awards but this seems to have been relatively invisible; nominated by training managers? (non-academics) — won by Careers adviser? ? because "careers"? (Exp was not PhD) agenda generally important

Institutional Recognition of Careers Service and Careers Advisers	was a career supplement, so it got put in there. **Nalayini**: [27:19] A career supplement in terms of... **Anne**: [27:21] Our "UniLife" monthly magazine. **Nalayini**: [27:23] Is the "UniLife" for staff publication then? Or is that for everybody? **Anne**: [27:29] Was it "UniLife" for staff updates? Staff update is the staffed-based one. "UniLife" is the generic one. But winning the award was in the ….. [laughs] I found interesting at the time, but I didn't care. I got the award. [laughs] **Nalayini**: [27:48] So that was enough for you? **Anne**: [27:49] Yeah. **Nalayini**: [27:50] In terms of knowing what you'd achieved. **Anne**: [27:54] Yeah. I think the fact that we got that award as a prompt to getting this distinguished achievement award. It's going to be now or never. [laughs] I can't win another one. **Nalayini**: [28:13] Well I think it's a great achievement, I think to win a Times Higher Award, they are hotly contested. The sector is increasingly valuing that recognition. I think for a careers service to be behind something that wins that is a real achievement. **Anne**: [28:39] I think so. I'm very proud of it. It's not as widely known as it could be or should be. Tried ways to get it publicized. It always comes as a surprise to people when I tell them, whether they're post grads or academics. They look at it and say, "Oh, this is really good. Why didn't I know about it?" **Nalayini**: [laughs] [29:00] That's the actual, the resource, the site. **Anne**: [29:03] Yeah. **Nalayini**: [29:05] It's a well kept secret. **Anne**: [29:09] I don't try to keep it a secret. I think it's one of these things, with obviously, with the high turnover of students, you've got to constantly be publicizing.	Does this reflect / indicate "historical" "style / priority / of anything related to careers in HE ? Good that Anne felt rewarded not short-changed by lack of recognition; could have affected confidence

Nalayini: [29:20] Yeah, that's interesting. In terms of your experience of feeling like a professional in the university environment, and the new, and I use new in inverted commas, and employability in inverted commas, because I'm not sure how I feel about the word. But it is here yet to stay. So in that new environment, have you experienced any change in your feeling on being recognized as a professional in this environment? Or do you anticipate any change?

Anne: [29:52] That's a very interesting question. Because suddenly you write the employability agenda, and all that kind of stuff, which again, I've got issues with the terminology. Yeah, it is suddenly a big flavor of the month. For the first time ever, really frankly at Institution and like anything with academics, discover for the first time, they think they know everything about it. [laughs] What they're doing is revolutionary, and they'll go off and do it on their own and forget, "Oh, yeah, there is this careers ser...I forgot about that." [30:24] We're getting quite a lot of that. Wherever possible if we hear hints of things going on, the thing to do is to basically rock up as quickly as you can and say, "Hey, we're here. Can we help you?" They're often very, very welcoming. It's just that it hadn't occurred to them that we could help. Or actually that was our territory, so get off our patch. [laughs] We found some of this in some faculties before, schools before here, it does happen.

[30:57] I've always been over protective of my territory. I don't like people taking stuff away. But everyone's worked out amicably what the boundaries are. I work on a model of, "What can I do for you?" rather than trying to block people. I know there have been a few. I can think of one or two examples of people who felt that somebody in the school or faculty has been very protective of doing career stuff out in their school faculty.

[31:30] It's actually caused tension between the relationship. But I suppose underneath that, that could occur to me. But you try and swallow that, and get in there, and somehow work with them rather than against them.

[31:46] And then eventually you get a reputation that, "Oh, talk to Anne. She's really helpful," rather than "Oh, I don't want to talk to the career service." So try to say yes as much as possible. Yeah, so. Yeah, so there are more people who are going away offon their own..

[32:15] An interesting one's going to be if we're seen as being sidelined, and I think that's a real danger. I don't see it imminently, but it could tend to that, where the faculties in the schools start to put finance and resource and money people into people who look for jobs for their students and who will want to engage directly with employers.

[32:44] Then say, "Well, what did the career service do for us? What's the point of having that? Let's just

Impact of Working with Academic Community – Access + Facilitation

New Emp Climate – duplication?

Challenge of working with academic community as non-academic – they discover it + "own it"

But maybe not actively 'anti' but just unaware [do CAS overreact misinterpret academic reaction as don't understand academic perspective?]

have it all out in schools and faculties." I think that's one of the dangers of us not being closely aligned with schools and faculties. We got a lot better over the years. There are stronger relationships with individual schools.

[33:05] But one model is to have people based within schools or faculties. I always come back to when we were discussing our...the last re-organization, what the career service was going to look like a few years back. I always come back to my experience working in HR, where we had a relatively small HR team, division with HR managers.

But the divisional HR managers and associated admin people worked were physically located within...I guess our four divisions.

Nalayini: [33:38] In their division, right.

Anne: [33:40] And so, my office was right next to the shop floor, which was right, you know, just down the corridor from the manufacturing managers, to all intents... I went to their management meetings. So I was part of their management team. It's just that once a fortnight, we'd all get together as HR people in the room, lock the door, and bitch and moan about our [laughs] line managers, who we were working with. They were fun. It was really, really strong, tight HR team. We were all generalists, apart from each one of us had a specialism. In that setup. I was providing the recruitment, discipline, and everything for the manufacturing division, but my specialism was , won't surprise you, pay benefits, graphs, stats…

[cross talk]

[34:25] ...which I did for the whole company. Somebody else did graduate recruitment for the whole company and trained for the whole company. We had specialisms that our other HR colleagues could draw on. So we had that kind of...it's a two way matrix, or my allying manager was the HR director. But my day to day, every, all my working days were spent with the manufacturing people and their operations director.

Nalayini: [35:00] Looking back, did that work?

Anne: [35:02] That worked incredibly well. It meant that we were close to the people that we were trying to provide the service to. It was a very paternalistic company who treated their people ever so well but very paternalistic. So really knowing the people you're trying to provide a service to that is so important. [Coughs] Excuse me. I might need to get some water.

Challenge / new employability climate

Comfort with 'specialist' as CA originates here?

Suggestion that CAs / CSTO separate from academic community; physically and in work terms

Shows comfort with idea / specialism in HR role + exp / multi-professional teams

Nalayini: [35:29] I was going to say.

Anne: [35:31] Oh gosh, yeah. [Coughs] That model could work in a careers setting. I think there's plusses and minuses but it could be made to work.

Nalayini: [35:59] And not compromise a sense of being a professional.

Anne: [36:06] It needs very very strong leadership and it needs something that you rely on each other for. I think that was the nicest part was having a specialism which you had to be talking to your other HR colleagues on the phone and at least one a fortnight face to face. We had a strong leader who bonded us all together.

Nalayini: [36:29] That was an HR leader?

Anne: [36:34] I know it can work, and work very well. I think we might have missed a trick by not seriously considering that and being very careful to want to keep everything central and keep everything together. "We'll build relationships with faculties and schools and so on." It still keeps bursting out all over. [37:01] We keep recruiting people who are essentially pseudo careers staff, at least doing quite a significant proportion of what we try to deliver while still going on about well we've got a fantastic career service. I think we'll quite quickly start to think, "Oh well, what does this fantastic career service do other than the careers fairs?" I think that's the danger.

Nalayini: [37:25] I think that's a shared experience for a number of institutions.

Anne: [37:35] It's new. That'll be interesting to look out for in the future.

Nalayini: [37:40] Yeah. We've been talking how you feel like a professional in the university setting. In terms of my questions, we've covered them very nicely. Is there anything else you could think of that our discussion has brought to mind?

Anne: [37:58] There's one thing which I hadn't really...It surprises me I don't really so much worry about is the fact that although I'm spending most of my time providing career advice, support, and so on with post grads and particularly for PhDs. I don't have a post grad degree myself, and frankly, it doesn't bother me. [38:23] Although I had one or two others, I think it was quite a while ago. That actually was from another institution. I was doing some work with them and their trainer who did have a PhD, and started going on about how I shouldn't feel in any way essentially inferior because I didn't have a PhD. I just laughed because it had never occurred to me to feel inferior. [laughs] My view is I've rejected PhDs.

Challenge of Duplication in New Emp Environment

Comparison with qualifications

Importance of Strong leadership when working in more distributed way [most likely in HE]

"We" = Univ; Challenge of distance from academics in employability era – will do it themselves if "in vogue"

Personal confidence – aware of qual difference but doesn't feel inferior because of previous experience

as a recruiter. I have something of value to offer here.

Nalayini: [38:59] I was going to say, do you think it's maybe your industry experience that...

Anne: [39:06] Yeah, I think it helps a lot. I think I've got quite sure of myself in terms of...not in everything, you have dark nights of the soul when you think, I'm useless, I'm an imposter, I don't so often think, "I'm useless," and all of the rest. For the stuff I think I know about, how do you find jobs, how do come up with ways of looking at careers. I think I'm pretty much on top of my game as long as I keep moving. I'm always worried about if you stand still and that's it. We went through a bad period, I think, in the career service a few years ago where we spent too much time talking about how great we were.

"Oh, we were voted the top career service by employees again [inaudible 40: [39:56] 00] how fantastic at career service we are. Oh,but we're not." everything, and I've always said, "Well, look at our results. We may be a great career service, but our students aren't getting jobs any more than others. In fact, quite less in some cases."

[40:20] and that worried me that we were getting complacent, and I think we had a few good wake up calls. Maybe some of the other stuff isn't for sharing on the recorder.

[laughs]

Nalayini: [40:34] Sorry?

Anne: [40:35] Maybe some of the other stuff isn't for sharing on... [laughs]

Nalayini: [40:36] Yes, which is absolutely fine. Is there anything else you can think of in terms of the industry that you'd like to...

Anne: [inaudible 40:43] [40:44] profession...one thing which makes me feel professional within the institution is my network of contacts. Although I'm really lousy at the proper networking, I'm lousy at maintaining relationships. I've got colleagues who are absolute masters at that kind of stuff. [41:09] Building and maintaining relationships. I actually now feel that there are a lot of people I can go to. I know people, and that makes you feel connected. Also, you're connected with people who know what value you can bring.

That's lovely to have that network, and that's the thing which I think each time I've changed jobs. In changing jobs, that's something I've realized, the value of that network that I used to have. The way it's

Importance of specialist knowledge

Network - "other" gives sense of Professionalism

Lack of confidence but occasional; is that 'normal'? Might it be linked to personality type? (reflector?) Clare said the same

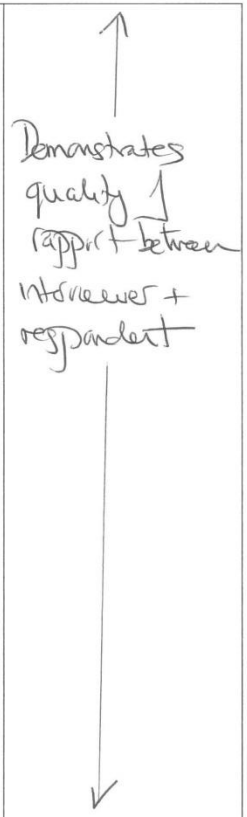
Shows confidence (may) Professional knowledge

Importance connections/ network - is an EXTERNAL thing; some dimension of who, not what you know

	easier to get things done before and how do I start that.. I still have that. [41:43] That's not just a case of getting things done. I think a network helps to validate you as a professional.. As long as you have a network of people who like what you do. They call you up and say, "Can you do this again?" That helps. **Nalayini**: [42:01] It sounds as if that network of training managers sounds quite strong. **Anne**: [42:05] It's training managers it' also people within schools and faculties for whom you do sessions. **Nalayini**: [42:10] It's a combination of training managers and academics. **Anne**: [42:13] Yes, some of them are academics, some of them are administrators. The academics, they often kind of change as academics do. Head of School one year and next time there's another Head of School I just wanted to work with whatever quite a number of years now. It's great to be able to go and hatch new things. I've got progress in life sciences which we always get fantastic feedback from for the final year of PhD. workshop. Every year, we sit down and think, "How can we throw this up in the air and start again?" [laughs] And so again, every year, change it, let's do something new. It's just working with other academics who are constantly wanting to…. **Nalayini**: [42:51] Do things differently. **Anne**: [42:53] What are we trying to achieve? This is getting great results. Actually, I don't think we are delivering what they need even though they enjoy it, let's do something which I think that they need and they'll still enjoy it. So try to come up, always looking for new things. What's with your feelings as a professional credibility is all the online presence, I forgot about that. [43:17] Having the blog which I started about four or five years ago now, that's good that helps for those people who know it. **Nalayini**: [43:30] How do you mean for those people? **Anne**: [43:32] Well, again, you've got a... **Nalayini**: [43:34] Oh, people that are aware that that blog is there? **Anne**: [43:41] Yeah, having that online presence.	Value of external "validation" => might not be valid without that ? Implication that training managers more constant ?, more enabling / have more influence than academics so is validation but not by academics. Use of "credibility" again

Importance of Credibility

Importance of Professional knowledge	**Nalayini**: [43:46] Is the credibility there the content or the reach or...? **Anne**: [43:53] The reach can be helpful because it's had a lot of readers over the years, absolutely. We still get a lot of traffic but also the content when people read it and, this is what I can't write blog posts which are...I've seen a lot of blog posts even in my failed working at post grad stuff, or referring onto stuff which I think is very light weight and doesn't say anything very much. I can't recommend this. [laughs] [44:24] I definitely curate on my Twitter feed. I'm really quite picky about what I retweet. Not that there is anything with stuff I don't retweet. It's just that, I don't think it actually has something quite interesting and new and isn't backed up. You'll find plenty of graphs on my blog. **Nalayini**: [44:43] I must go and have a look now. **Anne**: [44:45] Substantial posts, having said that, the last year I lost the love for the blog. I got sucked into doing a lot of promotional stuff at all our events and blah, blah, blah. It just doesn't feel particularly exciting so I've been starting, trying to do pure posts that are making it more substantial again. **Nalayini**: [45:09] Substantial is in terms of...? **Anne**: [45:12] Having something to say which will make people stop and think differently, I think. I particularly like the counterintuitive, paradigm shift type stuff. Having said that, I've just been blogging about emptycoke cans, sometimes you need to some off topicstuff [laughs] to generate some interest given the size of our community.[45:43] I'm the one that is communicating as to why two empty, two coke cans which are six years past their sell by date which we discovered in the career service cupboard, unopened and almost empty. **Nalayini**: [45:57] Unopened. **Anne**: [45:58] And almost empty. We eventually had some kitchen experiments which are videoed on my phone and I uploaded to a YouTube [laughs] and put on my blog, probably to see if I could do that, which I could but probably to just engage other people thinking about... **Nalayini**: [46:17] Yeah, engaging them differently. I must admit, I haven't mastered the whole social media, blogging, Facebook thing. It doesn't naturally seem to resonate with how I communicate or connect with people. I'm aware that there's a particular style and approach that I don't naturally fall into, so I really admire people that can. **Anne**: [46:45] Well, it's interesting. One of the people who I'd corresponded with, I've tweeted with, a PhD[inaudible 46:53] from Australia came over and did a talk. She's a lovely blogger academic whose	Importance of Professional knowledge: quality.

	field is now supporting online communications of PhDs, online presence , far more prolific than I am in terms of online presence, how does that train of thought go? She came over. One of the things that she said in her talk was about social media for PhDs where she actually rang true. Often, blogging and tweeting is actually more helpful for introverts. It's a way that introverts can have that pithy bon not that kind of thought, but it doesn't have to be an instant response and verbalized and move on. [47:40] It does appeal to those of us who are natural introverts, because you've got time to think and process, and then tweet something or blog something. I think that's why it's appealed to quite a lot of people in that whole PhD environment. [47:59] For some people, for those who are more comfortable with going out and finding people to just go and talk to and chat. All of this online stuff, frankly, it doesn't necessarily appeal quite as much as somebody who is a little bit more...can't come out with the words and thinks five minutes later, "I should have said that." I need time to think about it. **Nalayini**: [48:25] That would fit, actually. That would fit. The wordsmanship and the crafting of some of these tweets and blog posts is quite spectacular. I just think I don't have that way of doing it, but as you say, I'm someone that just It's all there straight away. Off it goes whether I like it or not. . **Anne**: [48:49] We envy you. I'm the only one who can envy you like that is by doing it with some kind of time removed on Twitter. [laughter] **Nalayini**: [48:56] Then it's there. It's captured, whereas our stuff just goes, and then it's gone and then that's it, I suspect that [inaudible 49:01] very much so... **Anne**: [49:04] I think that's one difference in the online presence. I don't know whether post grads and PhDs are, as a group, more introverted. It feels intuitive that they might be, but that mostly , things which are intuitive are working. . [49:22] I don't know, but certainly, a group of people seems to look into that. There's things like on Twitter the #PhD. chat or #PhD. advice search terms, which I know are a lifeline to some PhDs because they're isolated, nobody understands their experiences, and they know that either once a week or just generically, they can just... **Nalayini**: [49:49] That's a bit of a light bulb moment for me, actually, because I have a lot of good friends who are academics and who are constantly on Facebook and on Twitter, and I just can't keep up, and I don't quite seem to say the right thing when I do. **Nalayini** : [50:10] As you say, there is always a way of generalizing and stereotyping.	

Nalayini: [50:14] That fits, actually.

Anne: [50:18] That allowed me to have an online presence, which can help as a professional, because I've got several post grad Twitter account, *AnneSurname* professional Twitter account, and a completely separate, non-professional Twitter account.

Nalayini: [50:35] OK, right.

Anne: [50:37] I separate out my different personae. That works for me. It doesn't necessarily work in the same way for everybody.

Nalayini: [50:45] There is a professional online presence, as far as you're concerned, right

Anne: [50:51] Yes. OK?

Nalayini: [50:55] I've learned something. That's really enlightening. Thank you.

Anne: [50:59] Thank you.

Nalayini: [51:00] All right.

Anne: [51:01] Have you got what you needed?

Nalayini: [51:01] I most certainly have. Shall I press stop?

Transcription by CastingWords edited by NT

Helpful to have a sense of reciprocity by end of interview - shows good rapport.

<u>Appendix 12 –</u> Initial Thoughts on Data Analysis. February 2013 update from November 2012

1. How do Careers Advisers in Higher Education construct their Professional Identity? Possible Super-Ordinate Themes

1.7 Professional training and CPD

Conversations about 'how you came to be a careers adviser in HE' included discussion about qualification. - Most of the respondents made a link between their initial training and/or continuing professional development and their sense of feeling like a professional. Points of interest

a. A number of respondents have a Postgraduate Diploma in Careers Guidance – DipCG BUT the DipCG is not HE specific – a number of people who undertook the Dip CG felt it did not prepare them for their role in HE
b. A number have an AGCAS Postgraduate Diploma in Careers Work in HE. BUT the AGCAS Diploma is only taken by people once they have started work as a careers adviser in HE
c. Not all respondents have a careers-related qualification
d. Induction/initial support when starting in role – a number of people mentioned a lack of this when they started in their roles. Those who moved into the role from another profession and without the qualification were surprised by the expectation /assumption that they would just be able to do the job.
e. Some respondents commented on the lack of professional development opportunities within their service or the lack of requirement for CPD to practise as a Careers Adviser
f. The most experienced interviewees referred to the previous 'generation' of university careers advisers suggesting that there had been no need/expectation of a qualification or a high profile

Some relevant quotes

“I feel like the training I had was not adequate enough to prepare me in a lot of ways for the type of demands that are being placed on careers advisers now.” (DipCG-qualified careers adviser)

“I actually found it quite unnerving. I found the transition to be careers adviser quite hard, because there was definitely a feeling in those days, I’m not saying now...you can do this, you’ve been an HR Manager so you know what to do.”

“Even when I started, I didn’t actually know what I was doing. I didn’t really know what was getting into and absolutely had a crisis of identity at that stage.”

“..that was at a time when , rightly or wrongly, an awful lot of careers staff, a, were men and were frequently retired members of the armed forces for some bizarre reason. There were a lot of them about. Some of them were very good because they had good personnel dealing styles and some of them were just horrendous old buffers who frankly just wanted to cruise away in a corner somewhere in a university until they retired properly”

1.8 Through reference to/comparison with the student-facing elements of the academic and university community

Interaction with other parts of the university featured in all the interviews. Points of interest:

e. Unless the respondent’s caseload includes researchers, there is little or no reference to the university research agenda
f. Almost all respondents express awareness of the difference in the ‘level’ or nature of their qualifications compared with those that academics are perceived to have

g. It is in relation to the rest of the university (rather than students) where title is an issue
h. Working in partnership with academics or other university colleagues is described as an example of professional recognition
i. Curricular input has a strong impact on the professional identity of the respondents.
j. The status of the academics that careers advisers liaise with could be seen to be of relevance; some respondents note the seniority of the academics that they liaise with, suggesting that the seniority is helpful. Others talk about finding it easier to develop relationships with 'more junior academics' or training managers in faculties (not academic staff).
k. It is clear that academics are often 'gatekeepers' who can influence the access that careers advisers can have to students and limit the opportunities they have to deploy their professional expertise.

Some relevant quotes:

"I always point out that I think as careers advisers, generally, we tend to deal with the nice academics because it's their roles. They're the ones who get involved in the career stuff, tends to be the nice ones who care about the students."

"I suppose the qualifications issue of a Bachelors degree, and maybe if I had a Masters degree or a PhD, I would be seen in a stronger light maybe."

"I think it [an MA] might give me more. I might feel like "oh, OK, yes, I've got the academic qualification." So perhaps where you're expected to be more like a lecturer you can feel a bit more like you've done all the research. You're like a master of your field."

I also did it [Postgraduate Certificate in Education and Training] maybe to give me a little bit more Kudos with academics to show that I am

qualified in a teaching element, so I can create modules and create curriculum on your behalf."

"My job title doesn't do me any harm. Head of postgraduate career development...To be honest, maybe it gives the wrong impression. Maybe it does imply that I'm more senior than I am, but it helps us get a voice heard for careers."

1.9 By drawing credibility from elsewhere

There were a lot of uses of the words 'credibility' and 'kudos' in the interviews, in all cases unprompted by the researcher. Some of the male respondents used the terms more frequently within their responses. It appeared that for many, their credibility came from 'elsewhere' or 'others' other than from a sense of professionalism;

a) Many respondents drew on previous non careers-advisory experience; sometimes experience that they hadn't necessarily enjoyed or felt particularly successful within
b) Some drew a sense of credibility from the fact that they had links with employers and could bring them in
c) Institutional status was sometimes seen as a source of credibility
d) Those who had management roles, commented on the fact that the 'manager' title brought greater recognition and/or sense of status
e) NB – there is a tension in that many respondents are not interested in management roles but the findings suggest that a management role would give them a source of credibility that they don't currently have.

Quotes:

"..when they hear a bit about my background that helps, even with academics. You can say, "I've been a graduate recruiter, I've been a ..I'm shameless about pulling out even the software bit. It's like almost 30 years out of date but if I've got a bunch of computer scientists in front of me, I'll talk about writing machine code and they'll suddenly pay attention. [laughs].

" I think, I've been lucky in the departments that I've worked with in that, they are all departments that either my degree or my background has given me a little bit of kudos, of credibility."

"I've had to learn from experience to adapt and always lead with an external brief, and so, they [students] think, oh he goes out and speaks to employers. If employers are engaging with him, he must be.. he must have something about...do you know what I mean? It's that kind of thought. It's like, they need to know that we don't just live in that goldfish bowl, that we're out there in the real world being engaging with employers and finding out what employers are saying.."

1.10 By framing their purpose and feeling rewarded through student interactions and outcomes rather than the through the lens of institutional goals.

c) Many respondents used very positive/emotive language when speaking about their work with students and feel that 'the student' is what motivates them to do their job
d) A minority of respondents talked about taking a strategic perspective on delivery in the new climate. Two former Heads of Service, now working as careers adviser expressed their 'acceptance' that this is not a strategic role.

By framing their purpose and feeling rewarded through student interactions and outcomes rather than the through the lens of institutional goals Cont.....

Quotes:

"In terms of my passion and enthusiasm, God I love it. I wouldn't change that for the world. I love the students."

"I find the reward through working with students fantastic. Students is what makes my day."

"Students are the most important thing."

"I did used to enjoy that area of work, in terms of strategically looking at what's around there. That's a big difference but we can't expect that, because that's not the job we applied for." (former LEA strategic manager, now a careers adviser).

1.11 Within the context of Institutional Recognition

d. For some respondents there is an awareness of where the careers service is positioned within the institution and, therefore the way it is seen (particularly when it is part of Student Services).
e. Three respondents had been nominated for and received awards from their institution for academically linked/curricular-based activity.
    i. In one case, the academics had to be part of the award submission (even they just turned up on the key delivery days and provided input as directed by the careers adviser). Those academics stepped back and did not go to collect the prize as they felt it belonged to the careers advisers; the advisers got the feeling that the Registry (organising the ceremonies) could not see how this could have

ii. happened unless the advisers did what the academics had said.

iii. In another case, the careers adviser won an award for curricular input (teaching and assessment) but it was in the support staff category because they were in the careers service not an academic department.

f. The work of the Heads of Service in strengthening the position of the service or advisers within the institution was often recognised.
Example Quote:

"For *InstitutionX* we had a very proactive Head of Careers, and the service was fully recognized and acknowledged within the university. Therefore you were slotting into an environment where you automatically felt quite valued, not just by the careers service, but within the institution generally. I think that was a lot to do with the way we were led, with the management of the service."

"In that university, and virtually every other university I've worked at, careers advisors and careers have always been designated as support rather than academics. We've almost got a label to start with which says we're not academics."

1.12 By articulating alternative " definitions" of the purpose/nature of their role:

Across the interviews, respondents conceptualised the role of a careers adviser in a number of different ways:

g) Specialist
h) Not an Expert
i) Generic
j) Facilitator
k) Educator

l) Empowering Educator

A number of respondents regularly associate the word ‘general’ or ‘generic’ with their work. One talks about being “completely flexible”. There does not seem to be a consistent sense of where, if anywhere, the expertise or distinct offering lies. For some it is guidance, for others links to employers. The most discussion is around ‘getting into departments’ or ‘getting into the curriculum’. It is almost as if the focus on what is most difficult is detracting from the areas of practise that respondents DO have control over.

A number of respondents firmly state that they are not interested in a management role (and not liking strategy/politics). This is interesting as in almost all cases it means that there is no career progression (in the conventional sense) available to them so they could be seen as ‘trapped’ or at least, feeling limited. One respondent said they did not know what would be ‘next’ for them but that they couldn’t keep doing this until they retired; management was not an option. NB this is interesting given that their jobs are about supporting students in their career development and in many cases, helping them to enter or prepare for management careers.

It was also interesting to note that 3 participants talked about the importance of their sessions being ‘fun’ as a way of engaging people (in 2 cases other university staff). What does this say about how they present themselves?

3. What do they feel will be the impact of the ‘new’ employability climate on their sense of professional identity?

e) All respondents feel that they are experiencing or anticipating change as their institutions become more interested in employability.

f) Generally they feel that there is potential for careers advisers and careers services to have an increased profile but they recognise that with that, there will be 'no place to hide'.
g) In some cases there are concerns that other parts of the institution are/will start to deliver activities that Careers Services already do.
h) In many cases concern was expressed that if there is an increase in demand, they and their services are not resourced to meet them.
i) There seems to be a tension between recognising the benefit/need to be 'out' in faculty more but a sense that more distributed activity might undermine the case for a central service.

Example quotes:

"I think it could be a really good opportunity for careers advisors to create a sort of new identity, then, a more dynamic one than perhaps what they had in the past, where it's not just , we do one to one appointments , and that's it."

"People are running with things without really taking note of is this actually going to achieve anything or is it just brownie points? That's what I probably say because employability is just crazy here, and nobody's got a rein on it, where it's going or what it's doing."

"Because particularly now, the agenda's coming our way, and there's money to be had. If we wanted, this is our time!"

"To a certain extent we've got the weight of the reputation of the university on our shoulders, because we can't just churn out people with subject knowledge, they've got to have the right skill set as well.."

4. So what does that Professional Identity look like?

a) Fragile and under-confident
    - A sense of wanting credibility and kudos and having to demonstrate it – often/usually NOT through the fact that they are a careers adviser per se

- A sense that the title is undermining with the academic community and more generally due to ‘public perception’
- A lack of confidence in the professional qualification/training/CPD in many cases
- An awareness of the level of qualification in relation to many academic colleagues

b) Conflicted

Sometimes the conflict is apparent within individual interviews. The key areas emerging appear to be:

- A strong love of the job and sense of being valued and understood by immediate colleagues set against a frustration at a lack of understanding about what the job involves and a lack of recognition of the role and the work
- A sense of feeling that careers advisers should be “more academic” in terms of qualifications and engagement in curricular/teaching activity set against a generally weak articulation of a sense of a body of knowledge or the importance of research for that professional identity and in order to do the job. If an interest in further qualifications is articulated it is with a preference for vocational rather than “academic” training. The motivation for further study is largely for increased credibility/status.
- They see employability as a positive development and that Careers Services should be at the heart of employability activity, but that it means there is no longer a hiding place. They recognise the challenges and opportunities that the focus on the employability agenda presents. Many are nervous about having to meet the demand that could be generated and see a potential threat in terms of other parts of the university moving into the space.

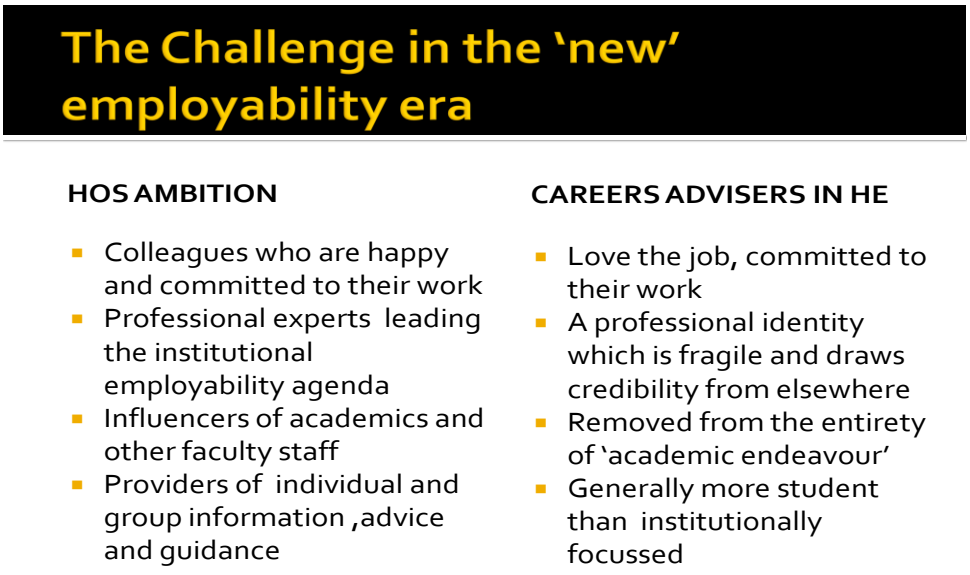
c) Contextualised through their lens

- There are lot of references to activity in other universities – many of them are clearly aware of what is going on in the services around them. However it is largely expressed by talking about the careers service alone and is not placed in a broader institutional context. This could be leading to false comparisons. In one interview, the respondent was speaking about the role of Careers Consultant (as we call them) in the researcher's own institution and had clearly mis-understood the way in which they work.

- Some of the respondents are aware of/feel their work is being affected by the changes to the Connexions services in schools – either in terms of the image of careers advice and guidance which has been negatively affected, or in terms of the guidance needs of the students which are much greater now.

4a) Challenges for Leaders and Managers of Careers Advisers

It occurs to me that it would be useful to have a summary of the challenges as I see them for leaders and managers before moving into recommendations. They would include these tensions which I summarised in my workshop in Cardiff:



I would also include reference to the fact that responses suggest that careers advisers don't seem to be interested in management roles which may mean that an institutional focus is of less interest to them.

4b) Possible recommendations for Leaders and Managers of Careers Advisers

This is very early-stage thinking but I have included some thoughts here so that you can see the directions I may head towards!

a) Actively outlining the broader institutional context in which careers advisers will be increasingly expected to work, and the national context for their institution in the new fees era. This can form a basis for encouraging careers advisers not only to see their role in terms of focussing on 'the student' but to see it terms of "using the structures of the university to impact on people." To quote this same Head of Service, "This is not about career coaching, this is an institutional job."

b) Encouraging careers advisers to benchmark against other institutions (through AGCAS networks) but to do this within a broader institutional context.

c) Induction/training and CPD

- Does it give your careers advisers the input and support they need – whether from a DipCG or industry background? Could/should this be reviewed?
- Could there be more low-cost ongoing CPD in terms of peer review for guidance interviews, structured expectations around updating knowledge etc?
- Could there be a steer toward some more research-based qualifications as part of professional development, to strengthen the research within the careers service but also to boost the sense of credibility for those individuals and the service as a whole?
- Should there be more training to develop peer-to-peer influencing and negotiation skills given the increasing expectation/demand to work in partnership with academic colleagues? This is not part of any professional training course and perhaps this is partly why the liaison with academic colleagues is so challenging.

d) Engagement with the academic community – this is important as academics often influence access and opportunity to fulfil the role

- To what extent do your careers advisers fully understand the role of the academic? Do they see that arguably they are drawing parallels with the academic role based on a very small percentage and the 'lowest status' elements of what a research-active academic actually does?
- In terms of effective working with academics, there are a number of measures which might make a difference:
    i. Organise training to help them to understand the full spectrum of tasks that a research-active academic undertakes to help them to put things in context
    ii. Look at ways in which the role of a Careers Adviser within your institution can be configured/presented in a

iii. way that has greater resonance with the academic community:

- Define and work towards ‘excellence’ in all careers adviser activities
- Define a ‘body of knowledge’ which careers advisers have and are expected to maintain
- Use language that matches that which is used in academic circles e.g. ‘collaboration’ rather than ‘partnership’, ‘expert’ or ‘specialist’ rather than ‘generic’ or ‘generalist’
    - Identify the areas of careers adviser work where the outcomes are likely of equal interest to academics and encourage them to ‘lead’ with those elements

Interesting Quotes which could contribute to a chapter on language to convey the underconfidence.

“I’m just a plain old careers adviser”

“I tend to take the feeling that I’m inferior because all these people have PhDs and Doctorates”

“I don’t feel like an expert.”

“I always feel slightly odd telling people what I do.”

“Careers is silver, Enterprise is gold.”

“In our own little office, So far as feeling like a professional in my little part of the careers advising room, to a certain extent, I feel like I’m valued like a professional “

“And there’s me with my little Bachelors, College of Higher Education, kind of thing.”

“I’d love to be able to sign passport photos and we’re not on that list.”

Appendix 13 Summary of Results for Discussion – work in progress

Appendix 13

Summary of Results for Discussion – work in progress

- The first page summarises the results as they have been written up.
- Page 2 looks at the **'subtleties'** within those results and page 3 the **'consequences'** which form the basis for the phenomenological interpretation of the experience of being a Careers Adviser in higher education.
- On page 4 recommendations start to emerge for Heads of Service in terms of addressing the challenges and opportunities that this professional identity present in the current employability climate.
- Page 5 is a summary of the headlines to see how the discussion and recommendations chapters might take shape.

Appendix 13

Training/CPD	Drawing Credibility From Elsewhere	Comparison with /Dependence upon Academics	Student than Institutionally focussed	Range of Conceptualisations
Findings	**Findings**	**Findings**	**Findings**	**Findings**
• "Newness" of profession in terms of quals/entry requirements and CPD • Dip CG Poor prep • AGCAS Dip after starting in role • Induction feels 'in at the deep end' • Lack of structured/supported/ routine CPD within the role	• Roles not understood and are perceived to be of low status • The CA job title is undermining – there is an enthusiasm for alternatives • Non-CA experience and contacts with recruiters give greater sense of credibility even if distant and not enjoyed • Institutional recognition contributes to sense of credibility and reaction is often mixed, even from fellow 'non-academics'. (awards)	• Unfavourable comparison based on qualifications • Important to be seen on a par with academics • Teaching is the ultimate validation/partnership • Academics are gatekeeping something that is a low priority to them /not understood/of little interest *but how important is it to students? Could be mis-diagnosis/mis-direction leading to poor student feedback which will then perpetuate academic view*. Gatekeeping key to CA prof ID and practice • There is minimal engagement with the research agenda (in terms of research within CA work and connection with the HE Research Agenda)	• Focus on student – institutional goals not fully on CA radar despite employability agenda – it still is 'about the student' • Sees institutional issues for HoS and elsewhere	• Within range, all but one avoids concept of 'specialism'. • Active resistance to being an 'expert'*(because of lack of understanding of the role?)* • No consistent identification of, or approach to developing, expert knowledge.

Appendix 13

Training/CPD	Drawing Credibility From Elsewhere	Comparison with /Dependence upon Academics	*Undergraduate* rather than Institutionally focussed	Range of Conceptualisations	'(Colour-Coded)'Themes' for Discussions of Results
Subtleties	**Subtleties**	**Subtleties**	**Subtleties**	**Subtleties**	
• Assumption *by Hos* that industrial/other experience is sufficient to do the job • Guidance training –those who have it struggle to align training and practice and feel can/should personalise practise to suit their style • *People feel they are "getting away with it"*	• More senior/management roles add credibility as means dealing with higher status people – even CAs don't see each other as high status; fundamental undervaluing of the role – how can they contribute to increasing understanding and status of the role? • Potential conflict between value of managerial title and lack of interest in mgt roles. *Lack of interest in University role* • Other parts of the univ don't value CA work/role	• Often working with 'lower status' academics – young or those focussed on UG teaching which is a low-status academic activity • Perhaps feel rejected when is just academic priorities/reality • CAs NOT recruited for academic credibility-start at a disadvantage within the institution *BUT that is an institutional decision* Vicious Circle – don't have quals but not deemed important for the role...	• Lack of interest in 'politics' - leads to feeling trapped in role? What would be next? Irony given CA there to develop careers and contradiction with advice being given to students • Focus on students is a 'lower' level interaction within hierarchy of HEIs – are not positioning themselves for status *and not expressing an interest in a university role eg: as a professional allied to academia*	• Occasional contradiction where there is an awareness of a lack of expertise but no apparent strategy/priority to develop • Overall, sense of lack of time for those trying to maintain/develop • Previous experience is seen as a source of credibility *but not expertise with academics and students-so difficult to have confidence in the person* • *Vicious Circle – don't have expertise, can manage without expertise, so can't feed expertise*	Elements of individual experience that contribute to.. Internal Undervaluing Positional Disadvantage of Careers Advisers within HEIs

Appendix 13

Training/CPD	Drawing Credibility From Elsewhere	Comparison with /Dependence upon Academics	Student than Institutionally focussed	Range of Conceptualisations	Summary Recommendations for HoS
Recommendations	**Recommendations**	**Recommendations**	**Recommendations**	**Recommendations**	
• Important to recognise/value CA skills and consider them during recruitment • Induction needs to be thorough *and avoid assumptions* • Structure CPD , setting standard, incorporating Peer Review, allowing/expecting time to be spent	• To work with CAs to establish 'inner' sense of credibility • Encourage employer contact/work shadowing alongside work – part of CPD • Encourage & provide training for liaison with senior/influential HE people within CA role • *Provide management/leadership training*	• Support/encourage expertise in Guidance and Employer/Grad market knowledge • Encourage support for further qualifications, particularly in research *(DCG to MA)* • Develop CA understanding of academic role (CPD) • Encourage and provide training in peer-to-peer communication/relationship building and political links • *Work on academic understanding of the role*	• Speak to CAs about institutional issues to make their work feel as relevant as it is. Will need to spell it out (CPD). Will take time. • Build engagement with institutional issues into CPD for CAs	• Agree/identify a body of knowledge/expertise for CAs • Identify time/expectation of time spent developing knowledge • Use peer review to help CAs 'own' their contribution to guidance interactions so they know it even if client feels is all them.	1. Actively Value the Role – Brand and *Position as a high status profession – at least alongside academics* 2. Structure development of the role 3. Support alignment with academic values including the building of expertise 4. Help develop effective working across the institution

Appendix 13

Training/CPD	Drawing Credibility From Elsewhere	Comparison with /Dependence upon Academics	Undergraduate rather than Institutionally focussed	Range of Conceptualisations	(Colour-Coded)'Themes' for Discussions of Results
Consequences	**Consequences**	**Consequences**	**Consequences**	**Consequences**	
• Underconfidence • Sense of isolation/winging it/reliance on peers • Variable- if any-CPD. No set standard for training, qualifications and CPD	• Search for external credibility beyond previous experience reinforces lack of confidence in role per se – nothing is done to feel more confident in the CA role itself • Is not universally ongoing (some of the experience is old – potentially out of date) nor are people proactive in gaining experience unless they change roles ('escape'). Lack of new ideas.	• Value of curricular input over guidance (woolly?) and employer work (scary?) even though they are a source of expertise which resonates more with academic approach • Little/no connection with research agenda • Sense of under-confidence amongst advisers *and by academics and students?* because of lower quals • CAs autonomous in role but have much less control over this element of their work	• Personal fulfilment from work with students but is distance from institutional agenda *therefore have less influence and control which means less confidence when climate is changing, even if for the better • Could lead to 'loving the clients, hating the context' – challenge for HoS. • *Role more dealing with YPs with little w.exp – safer –acting 'in loco parentis' rather than dealing with peers* *Do they position themselves to ' not belong?' ; not institution, not business, 'just' deal with students – seems to be less valuing of self – need to be 'high status' person	• No coherent, updated body of knowledge • No importance placed on research in the field • Lack of confidence because of lack of knowledge • Preference for partnership/facilitation removes opportunity to claim any sole impact – will undermine confidence • Pressure to maintain knowledge but not formal: seems to be something they 'just have to fit in'; seems to be the nature of the profession (cf, eg GPs)	Underconfidence (ref internal undervaluing and facets of role, above) Misalignment with academic experience (ref positional disadvantage, above) Underdeveloped Disempowered *There is poor branding and positioning of role*

Appendix 13

Summary of Structure for Discussion

What does the professional identity of Careers Advisers in higher education feel like?

- Underconfident
- 'Misaligned' with academic experience
- Underdeveloped
- Disempowered

How do Careers Advisers feel about the 'new' employability climate? (not derived through coding as above)

- Seen as a positive development in terms of potential profile of Careers Services and the fact that the employability agenda is valued
- However concern is expressed in relation to:
    - Visibility and Accountability (relates to underconfidence, underdevelopment above)
    - Challenge of meeting demand
    - Potential duplication of services
    - The impact of employability models

Recommendations for Heads of Service

- Work with other managers within service to help CAs to actively value the role
- Structure CPD for CAs , setting standards (with reference to academic portfolio) identifying an appropriate body of knowledge/expertise
- Support alignment of CA role with academic values including the building of expertise and the gaining of further qualifications and research experience
- Support CAs to develop skills for effective working across the institution with colleagues at all levels and in all roles (this will help to address the concerns about the 'new' employability climate as CAs could be more effective in dealing with the challenges)

Nalayini Thambar. DBA Discussion of Results and Recommendations Outline. 24/6/13. Updated 3/11/13

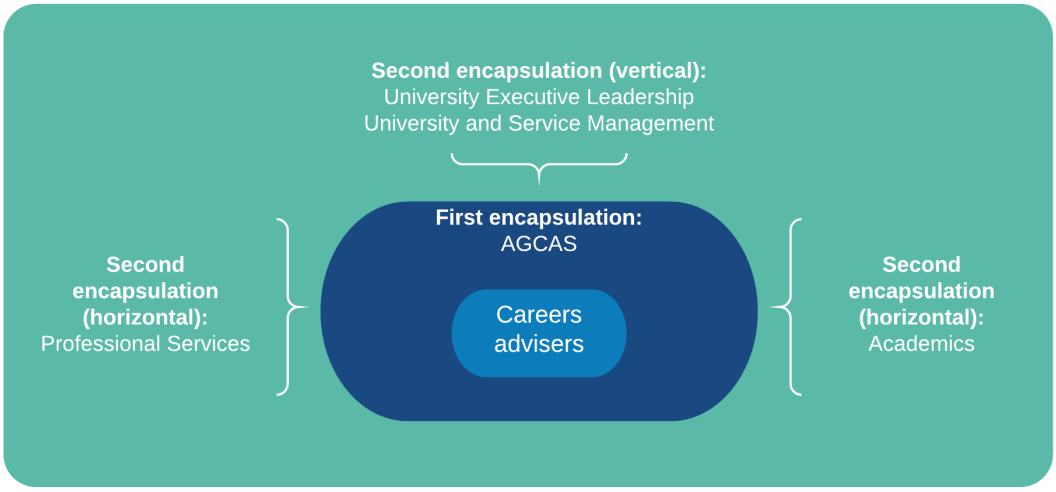
Appendix 14 Suggested Encapsulated Models

Following Ackroyd's (2011) theory of encapsulated professionals discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.3.a.i.1, the experience of respondents indicates that careers advisers might be encapsulated within their institution, and careers service, to varying degrees. However this was not a model which was discussed directly with the respondents and is therefore not a finding from this study.

In this Appendix, I therefore summarise four models of encapsulation which have emerged as a result of my interviews with respondents. An area for further research would be to interview careers advisers and heads of service to explore the relevance of these models to their professional experience.

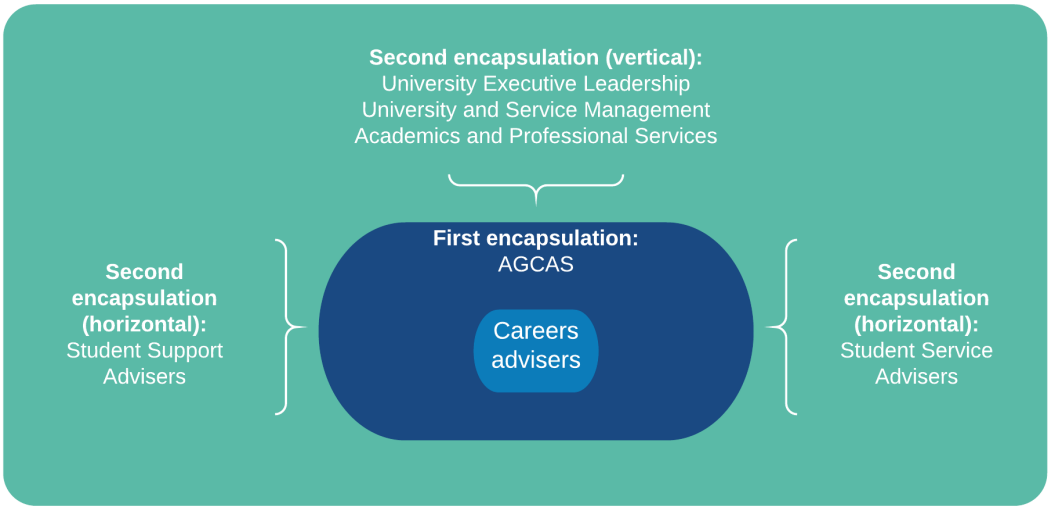
The encapsulation within a professional association is clear due to the strength of the AGCAS community of practice, mentioned by many of the respondents. The application of Ackroyd's theory to careers advisers also highlights some distinctive features of their position within higher education; the vertical encapsulation and the hierarchical position of careers advisers within their organisation (university) will depend on the way in which each institution has positioned their careers service in relation to the employability agenda. This may also affect careers advisers' horizontal relationships with other professional groups. Where a service and their careers advisers have been positioned as an expert in relation to careers and employability they are likely to hold a strong position in a hierarchy (equivalent to academic and professional service roles) and in a position to build horizontal relationships with other academics in order to fulfil their professional role. This is illustrated by Frederick's experience of meeting academics who express a wish in learning from him about 'what works' in terms of employability provision. This "positive encapsulation" is represented in the diagram below:

1. Double Encapsulation where the careers service has institutional influence



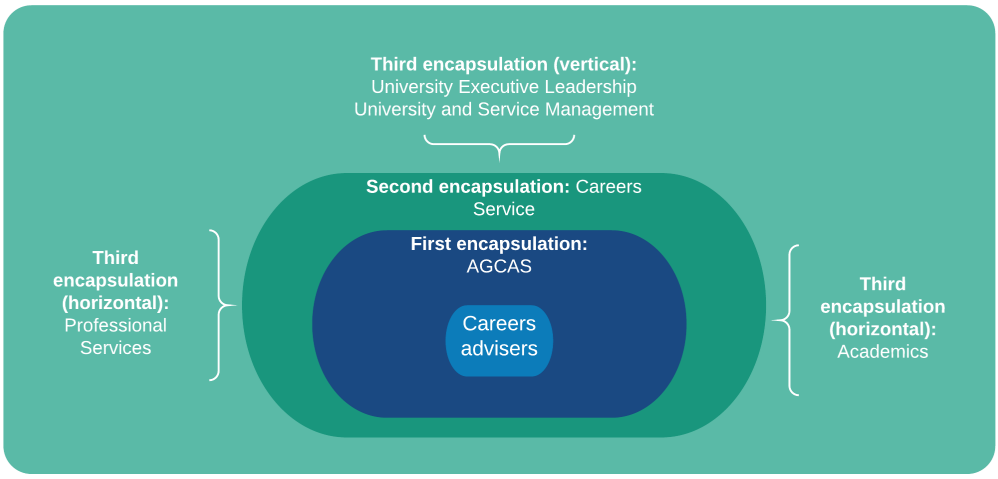
However in institutions where careers services are not considered the strategic leaders of careers and employability, institutional structures may position careers services alongside other student services and therefore careers advisers in line with student advice roles. This is the experience of Ellie who described her institutional liaison much more with other student support services than with academic colleagues. This will result in an encapsulation which places careers advisers in a lower position within the hierarchy as illustrated below.

2. Double Encapaslation where the careers service has limited institutional influence

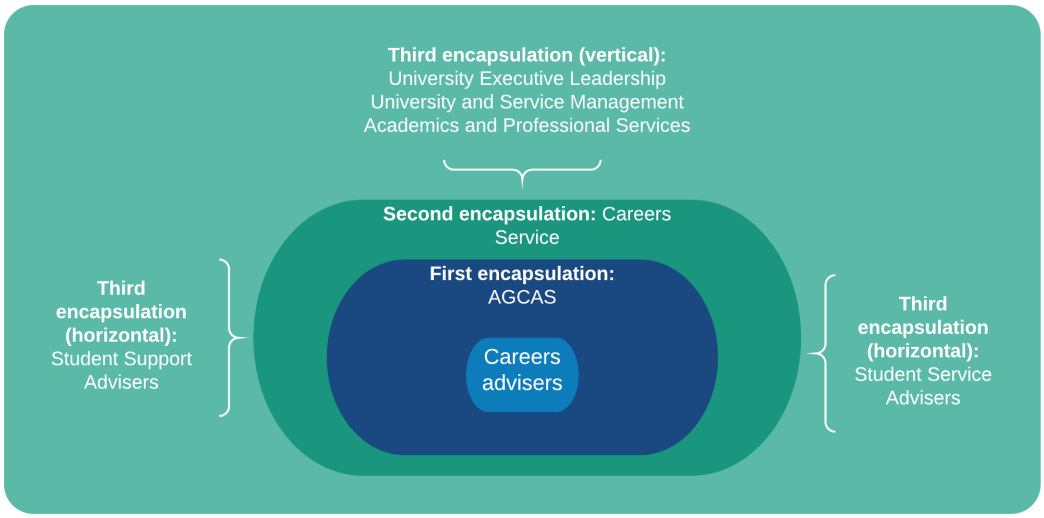


There may also be a third dimension to the encapsulation; depending on the scale and scope of the careers service, some careers advisers will feel encapsulated within their own service, seeking to maintain a stronger professional position than work placement, student enterprise or skills development who represent the employability agenda in its broader and "newer" sense. This was the experience of Paul in relation to work placement staff. Such a challenge will be compounded if the careers service does not lead the institutional employability agenda as Mathilda was experiencing through her institution's focus on an entrepreneurial agenda which encompassed employability. The diagrams below illustrate the impact of triple encapsulation for careers advisers in an institution where the service holds a strong position and in an institution where the careers service has less influence.

3. Triple Encapsulation where the careers service has institutional influence



4. Triple Encapsulation where the careers service where the careers service has limited institutional influence



The four encapsulations described above illustrate the range of institutional positions that a careers adviser might experience depending on the positioning of their role and service. The range is illustrated by the contrast between figure 1 where careers advisers have a strong position within a service with institutional influence, and figure 4 where Careers Advisers are encapsulated within a service which has limited institutional influence.

Ackroyd suggests that encapsulated professionals who do not enjoy a strong hierarchical position will take an inward-looking and defensive position. It might therefore be expected that Careers Advisers in higher education might take an increasingly inward-looking and defensive stance across the range of institutional positions described here. Within the triple encapsulation described above, the role of professional managers both within the careers service and within the University will an impact on the position and professional independence of a Careers Adviser despite the reinforcement of professional identity through strong associations with AGCAS. Position will also affect the self-perception that a group of careers advisers have of their influence and status.

Further research could explore these models in more detail. The findings may prove particularly helpful to heads of careers service in understanding the impact that the positioning of their careers service might have on the professional experience of careers advisers and on the potential to influence the institutional employability agenda.